

MARY E. SURRATT

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# The Assassination of Abraham Lincoln

Mary E. Surratt

Excerpts from newspapers and other  
sources

From the files of the  
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

—It is said that Mr. Aiken, one of the counsel of Mrs. Surratt, is busily engaged in writing her biography. Not an elevating task, one would think.

TELEGRAPHIC COMMUNICATION WITH NEW ORLEANS—THE DEFENCE OF MRS. SURRETT. It is a noteworthy fact that business despatches are today passing direct between this city and New Orleans for the first time in four years and two months, over wires managed not by government operators, but by employees of the telegraph companies. Mrs. Surratt's counsel propose to prove that the determination to murder the President was only arrived at after six o'clock on the evening of the assassination, so that their client could have known nothing about it when she rode to Lloyd's tavern. They will have hard work to persuade the court or the public to this belief. [Washington despatch to the Advertiser.]





The Conspirators: Center, Mrs. Mary E. Surratt; Left, Top to Bottom, Booth, Atzerodt, Arnold and Spangler; Right, Top to Bottom, Payne, Herold, O'Laughlin and John Surratt





THE LATE RESIDENCE OF MRS. Surratt, 541 EIGHTH STREET, WASHINGTON.  
[SKETCHED BY E. A. FERRINS.]

Reproduced from the original sketch by E. A. Ferrins.

**The Original Papers in the Case of Mrs. Surratt Unearthed.**

Washington, Aug. 5.

In the speech of Judge Pierpont in his argument to the jury in the Surratt case made an important statement which he verified by producing the original record relative to the execution of Mrs. Surratt. It has been charged, it will be remembered, that the order for Mrs. Surratt's execution was handed to the President by a member of the cabinet, and that it was signed without consultation. The following verbal extract from Judge Pierpont's speech tells the story:

"I have not come here for the purpose of proving that Mrs. Surratt was guilty, or that she was innocent. I do not understand why that subject was lugged into this case, as it has been; nor do I understand why the counsel denounce the military who tried her and thus indulge in censure in such manner. The counsel certainly knew when they were talking about that tribunal, and when they were thus denouncing it, that President Johnson ordered with his own hand that commission; that the President signed the warrant that directed the execution; that President Johnson when that record was brought before him, brought it to his cabinet, and that every single member voted upon it that they hated to confirm the sentence, and that the President with his own hand wrote his confirmation of it, and with his own hand wrote the original record; no other man as it appears from that paper, ordered it; no other one touched this paper. When it was suggested by some of the members of the commission that in consequence of the age and the sex of Mrs. Surratt, it might possibly be right to change her sentence to imprisonment for life, he signed the warrant for her death with the paper right before his eyes—there it is, (handing the paper to Mr. Merrick)—my friend can read it for himself.

New York Aug. 5.

The Times special says the recommendations for mercy for Mrs. Surratt, made by members of the military commission which tried the assassination conspirators, has at last been unearthed, and read as follows:

"The undersigned members of the military commission detailed to try Mary E. Surratt and others for conspiracy and the murder of Abraham Lincoln, late president of the United States, &c., respectfully pray the President in consideration of the sex and age of the said Mary E. Surratt if he can upon all the facts of the case, find it consistent with his duty to the country to commute the sentence of death which the court have been constrained to pronounce to imprisonment in the penitentiary for life. Respectfully submitted.

"D. D. HUNTER, Maj. Gen., Pres't.

A. AUG. KAUTZ

Brig and Brevet Maj. Gen.

R. L. FOSTER,

Brig. and Brevet Maj. Gen.

JAMES A. EGIN.

Brevet Brigadier General.

C. H. THOMPSON,

Brevet Col., and A. Q. M."

This recommendation was drawn up by Hon. John A. Bingham, the Judge Advocate, and the following members of the court refused to sign it: Generals Lew. Wallace A. P. Howe, T. M. Harris and Col. D. R. Glenshaw.

J WRIGHT



No other contribution to the periodical literature of the year will attract so much attention as the deeply-exciting story which J. W. Clappitt tells in *The North American Review*, concerning the death of Mrs. Surratt. The narratorial facts may easily be grouped together. Mr. Clappitt's statements will surely challenge contradiction; if they remain uncontradicted, the execution of this unfortunate, and, as he cogently claims, perfectly innocent woman is as foul a crime, by the packed commission that tried her, as was the assassination of President Lincoln by Wilkes Booth. Mr. Clappitt was one of Mrs. Surratt's counsel.

The proposition upon which Mrs. Surratt was convicted and hung was that her house in Washington had been a rendezvous of the conspiring assassins, and that she was cognizant and participated in their plans and purposes. The official report of the trial does not contain any evidence showing that she was present at any meeting of the conspirators, in her own house or elsewhere. The evidence upon which she was convicted was given before the commission by one Weichman, and Payne who failed in his attempts to murder Secretary Seward. The true value of the testimony of Payne and Weichman is fully exposed by Mr. Clappitt, and constitutes the most interesting and valuable portion of his paper. His overwhelming demonstration that both were deliberate perjurers does not appear in the official report of the trial, for reasons which will appear.

May E. Surratt was a native of Maryland, and, in her youth, was considered a country belle. She married a prosperous man, who, on his death-bed bequeathed her a house and some land in the city of Washington, and an estate in Marlborough county, Maryland. When the war broke out this estate soon succumbed to its ravages, and she was compelled to remove to her Washington home and take boarders in order to earn a livelihood. She had a daughter, who, like her mother, was pretty and attractive, and among her many admirers was John Wilkes Booth, who frequently called to see the young lady, and who showed her mother many little courtesies. Mrs. Surratt's plantation property was in danger of passing entirely out of her control, and she was in correspondence with a gentleman with the view of rescuing it. On the morning preceeding the assassination Mrs. Surratt received a letter from the gentleman alluded to, requesting her presence the next day at Upper Marlborough Court House. She had been in the habit of barrowing Booth's horse and buggy to make similar journeys, and sent Weichman, who had been a frequent visitor at the house, to ask Booth to let her have his conveyance. Booth replied that he was sorry he could not, as he had sold his horse and buggy; but, as Weichman was about to go away with this answer, Booth added: "Here, take this ten dollars, and hire one." This was immediately after Booth and other conspirators had met at the Herndon house and arranged the details of the assassination. Among the articles which Booth then had and did not want to keep during the day were a spy-glass and a pistol. He had been in the habit of going shooting in Surrattsville, where he stopped with John M. Lloyd, a tavern keeper. As Mrs. Surratt and

Weichman drove by on Good Friday morning, Booth handed her a package containing these articles, requesting her to hand them to Lloyd as she drove through Surrattsville, on her way to Marlborough Court House, and to say to Lloyd that he, Booth, would call for them that night. Mrs. Surratt knew that Booth hunted in that neighborhood, and construed the package and message accordingly. The truth was that Booth intended to make his escape in that direction after doing the frightful deed he had resolved upon. Mrs. Surratt did not alight from the buggy at Surrattsville, but handed Lloyd the package and gave him the message. This circumstance, perfectly innocent in itself, was conclusive to the commission that Mrs. Surratt was cognizant of Booth's purpose.

Weichman, to save himself, turned state's evidence and swore pretty much what the prosecution wanted. Near the close of the trial, after his evidence was all in he was overtaken with remorse, and, in a spasm of despair, confided to a reputable young man in Washington that his implication of Mrs. Surratt was wholly false; that the government, as the only way of affording him a chance of escape compelled him to make such a statement; that the judge advocate general refused to take the first "confession" he wrote out as not being strong enough, "that his life being threatened he made out a second statement according to the wishes and demands of the prosecutors." The young man to whom Weichman made this revelation was highly trustworthy; but when he offered to go on the witness-stand the commission would not permit him to testify!

Another witness employed by the prosecution was the man named Van Steinaker, who produced himself after the offer of large rewards for testimony to convict. Von Steinaker swore that he had been an officer in the topographical department of the confederate army, serving on the staff of General Edward Johnson, with the rank and pay of engineer, being in the confederate service for three years; that in the summer of 1863 he saw and was introduced to three civilians, in the camp of the 2d Virginia regiment; that Booth was one of them, and that the details of the assassination, and of the scheme to release rebel prisoners, and to lay northern cities in ashes, were there and then related and approved. The defense offered testimony showing that Von Steinaker was an audacious perjurer. He was, in fact, a deserter from the federal service, having enlisted in Blenker's New York regiment; condemned by a court-martial for stealing an officer's arms and equipments, he escaped to the confederates and, having enlisted as a private, was detailed as a draughtsman by Oscar Heinrichs, an engineer officer on Edward Johnson's staff. While serving in that capacity he was again convicted by court-martial for stealing an officers coat and arms. At the battle of Antietam he was captured and escaped by representing himself as in possession of the dead body of Major Douglas, of Edward Johnson's staff who, however, was not dead. The commission, instead of permitting these facts to be fully established by competent testimony, attack the counsel of Mrs. Surratt for presuming to impeach government witnesses, notwithstanding that the commission were not prosecutors, but were sworn individually to sit as impartial judges! The com-

mission was unable to exclude the testimony of General Edward Johnson, Oscar Heinrichs, or Major Douglas; nevertheless, Von Steinaker's manifest falsehoods were retained as truth in the record.

It is a well-known fact that the majority of the commission signed a petition recommending Mrs. Surratt to the president's mercy, and this paper was sent to the president as part of the documents in the case. Andrew Johnson, it will be remembered, declared on his honor that it was withheld from him, and that he never saw it until two years after Mrs. Surratt's execution. It is also well authenticated that on the morning of the execution, Payne, who also turned state's evidence to save himself and send an innocent woman to the scaffold, confessed to General Hartranft that all of his testimony implicating Mrs. Surratt was false. General Hartranft, inclosing this declaration as true in his belief, sent it to the president; but it was of no avail.

Mr. Clappitt's paper leaves the commission in the light of men madened by brutal partisanship into conniving for the death of an innocent woman, merely to satisfy the demand for somebody's blood. September 3, 1880.

At the time of Mr. Lincoln's death his private debts amounted to thirty-eight dollars and thirty-one cents. Few things in his career are more creditable to his character than this. He was evidently as prudent and conscientious in his private as in his public affairs. Few men in public life keep their accounts so strictly in hand. December 4, 1867.



# MRS. SURRETT'S CASE.

## SOME INTERESTING BITS OF GOSSIP FROM HER EXECUTIONER.

*2/07/1866*  
**Capt. Rath's Estimate of Harold and Paine—Accident to an Assassin's Revolver—Mrs. Surratt's Wonderful Self-Control—Mistake of Her Counsel.**

Capt. Christian Rath, of Detroit, is a remarkable man. He served his country from 1832 to 1865, and closed his military career by hanging the four conspirators condemned to death for the murder of Abraham Lincoln. For this he was breveted major and lieutenant-colonel of United States volunteers.

Capt. Rath is rather small in stature, but not at all insignificant, as many small men are. He is, moreover, a well built soldier, with clear cut, resolute features, and a round, neatly trimmed, Grant-like beard.

"I could sit and talk about those people for a whole day," said Capt. Rath. "I know enough about them to fill volumes. I had charge of those prisoners through their entire confinement, and at the last superintended their execution, so I had a good opportunity to study them. I always regarded Harold as an unthinking boy—a spoiled child. He was a great sportsman, though, fond of shooting, and the owner of a splendid pointer dog. We kept the dog for him in the prison, and at his death he left it to Gen. Hartranft.

"There was Paine. I liked that man. You know he was wounded at Gettysburg, taken prisoner, brought into Washington and paroled there. He was a magnificent man—big, strong, kind and generous, with an iron resolution, and a voice and manner as soft as a woman's. I liked Paine. When the prisoners were hooded and shackled to prevent them from dashing their brains out against the stone walls, Paine was the only one who never begged to have the hood and shackles taken off. The heat and discomfort must have been intense, but he never murmured. I tell you that man was a hero. He would have murdered a dozen men—would have waded through blood—and yet I believe he was thoroughly unselfish. The Confederacy was all and everything to him.

"You will probably remember that to Paine was assigned the assassination of Seward. He broke through Seward's door, knocked young Seward down with the stock of his big revolver, and cut the old man severely with a bowie knife. To this day the world has never heard why he did not use his revolver to shoot Seward. I can tell why. In striking young Seward the pin of the revolver was bent very slightly, but enough to prevent the chambers from turning, and, consequently, to shackle the lock. I tried the revolver myself afterward. Every chamber was loaded, but the hammer could not be raised. The blow which knocked the young man over was, without doubt, the means of saving his father's life. Paine thought that he had killed the old man. He was never undeceived until brought into court at the first trial. There he saw Seward, and realized that he had failed. He did not exhibit either pleasure or regret.

"Paine lay for two days concealed in the trenches outside Washington. At last nature gave out. He returned to the city, took refuge in Mrs. Surratt's boarding house, and was concealed in the cellar when a searching party entered the house and found him. He was carried before Mrs. Surratt, who declared that she had never seen him before. It was shown that he had been one of her boarders, and these two facts formed the strongest barrier to her pardon. Paine was dreadfully cut up about it. He held himself responsible for her position, and when the chances of reprieve grew slight, cursed his weakness in returning to her house over and over again.

"If I had two lives," he said, "I would let them both go to save her." I mentioned that to Mai Eckert, who told Secretary Stanton.

Paine was sent for at a meeting of the council and interrogated, with a view, I think, of bringing out facts which might justify Mrs. Surratt's pardon, or at least a commutation of her sentence.

"Mrs. Surratt was, I think, always actuated by the purest motives. She was shown some favor as being a woman. The rest of the conspirators were fed on army rations, but she was allowed to choose what she wished from the general table. Mrs. Surratt was a small, plump, pretty brunette, with flashing dark eyes and a will like steel. I remember one incident of her imprisonment which will give you some idea of her strength of mind. You will remember that a part of the old district penitentiary had been rigged up as a court house, while the other part was used as a military prison. Well, after Mrs. Surratt and her daughter, a charming girl of 16 years, had been separated for three months, they were allowed an interview, which was to last two hours. Miss Surratt came to the prison in the afternoon, and I conducted her to a room adjoining the court room, where Mrs. Surratt was writing. The girl just went over and sat down on her mother's lap and began to cry. I went away then; I didn't want to stay, and did not go near them again until some time after the two hours was up. When I took the girl away she was still crying, and I noticed that Mrs. Surratt had not shed a tear. I wondered at that. The girl cried all the way home to the Catholic institution where she lived, and you can believe it made me feel bad.

When I returned, I spoke to Gen. Hartranft and mentioned what seemed to me the almost heartlessness of Mrs. Surratt. Then the general told me that the little girl had scarcely left the prison when Mrs. Surratt threw herself down in convulsions of such grief as he had never dreamed of before. It seems hard to imagine the struggle that woman must have undergone to control herself through that long interview.

"There are few people who know how nearly Mrs. Surratt came to a reprieve, followed by a commutation of sentence. There was a strong sentiment in her favor, and, I think, some doubt as to the degree of her guilt. I will never believe that she was privy to Lincoln's murder. She approved, I think, of his proposed abduction, but never of his assassination.

"The night before the execution was when they had Paine up before the council. Next morning Mrs. Surratt's counsel had Gen. Hancock arrested in a civil process charging him with having illegal possession of Mrs. Surratt's body. The country was under martial law at the time, and the proceeding was absurd. Nevertheless, I think it turned the scale against Mrs. Surratt. The execution was fixed for 1 p. m., but before Hancock was released, which was done without ceremony by a sergeant and a squad of men, it had rung 3 o'clock. Hancock came hurrying in and said to me:

"Go ahead, captain," I ran up to him. "What, general," I said, "Her, too?"

"Yes," said Gen. Hancock, "she can't be saved."

"And so, I believe through her counsel's foolishness, Mrs. Surratt was hanged."

"I never knew Booth, but I always thought he was actuated rather by a desire for fame than for the good of the Confederacy. He was an emotional kind of a fellow, you understand, and I think wanted to be a hero."

Cor. Globe-Democrat.

## A NOTED CHARACTER.

### Spandauer, Who Aided in Convicting Mrs. Surratt, in an Unenviable Role.

A Baltimore, Md., letter to the St. Louis Globe-Democrat says: Several months ago Benjamin Spandauer, who was one of the most important agents in procuring the conviction of Mrs. Mary Surratt, in 1865, for participation in the conspiracy resulting in the assassination of President Lincoln, was arrested for alleged conspiracy in a noted divorce case here. He was indicted for alleged manufacturing of testimony. The suit was that of Mrs. Johanna Jensen against her husband. Judge Fisher decided the case in the wife's favor, and awarded her alimony. In his decision the judge said he believed the evidence submitted by her husband, for whom Spandauer was a leading witness, was a tissue of falsehoods from beginning to end. Spandauer was released on bail, and today his case came up, and State's Attorney Kerr entered a nolle pros in the case of John Jansen, the husband, who was indicted with Spandauer, and also the latter. The divorce suit has been finally settled. The state's attorney was of the opinion that the evidence in the case was not sufficient to warrant going to trial. Spandauer had several times before been arrested on similar charges. At the trial of Mrs. Mary Surratt, in May and June, 1865, Spandauer and Louis J. Weichman—the latter's evidence being corroborative—testified that Mrs. Surratt, who kept a boarding house, at which Wilkes Booth, Harold, Spangler and others met, had been frequently in the room where the conferences of the conspirators were held, and thus connected her with the plot. This was the evidence that convicted her.

For a number of years succeeding the war Spandauer and Weichman were lost sight of. Nothing more was heard of the latter until his death in Philadelphia, in great destitution, three years ago. Spandauer appeared in Baltimore about four years ago, and first loomed up to public notice again by persuading Heinrich Muhla, a German, that the latter was one of ten heirs to an estate in Germany or England, valued at \$3,000,000, and agreed to collect Muhla's share for percentage. Muhla advanced him \$100, and Spandauer in all obtained about \$1,500 from him. When Muhla found that the estate was a myth he had Spandauer arrested, and he was sent to prison for three years. Spandauer is an old man now, and not likely to figure before the public again.—Dec. 17, 1887.

(Note: The name of Spandauer does not appear in the index to names of those who testified at the celebrated "Conspiracy Trial." Weichman was the real cause of Mrs. Surratt's conviction. See list of witnesses in Ben Pittman's "Conspiracy Trial," pages 13-16.—J. W. W.)

Mrs. Surratt's Accuser Dead.

BALTIMORE, Aug. 8.—Benjamin F. Spandauer, who was the principal witness against Mrs. Surratt, hanged at Washington in 1865 on the charge of conniving at the assassination of President Lincoln, died today in the Maryland penitentiary. 1887

### Was a Witness Against Mrs. Surratt.

BALTIMORE, MD., August 8.—Benjamin F. Spandauer, who was the principal witness against Mrs. Surratt, hanged in Washington in 1865 on the charge of conniving at the assassination of President Lincoln, died today in the Maryland Penitentiary. 1887



### Survivors of the Lincoln Trial.

From the Washington Star.

P. C. 84  
"The newspapers were in error when they said that Judge Holt was the last surviving member of the military commission which tried the assassins of President Lincoln," said Col. Allen R. Hood, of Alabama. "There is still another of the leading members of that body alive in the person of John A. Bingham, of Ohio. Judge Bingham was for many years a representative in congress from Ohio, and was afterward made minister to Japan, where he served for a long time. Twenty-five years or so ago the old Washington House at Third street and Pennsylvania avenue was quite a favorite hotel with politicians and members of congress. Bingham lived there during his service in the house, and it used to be a matter of common report among the guests that every now and then the Ohio congressman would suffer from an attack of nervous terror, brought on, so it was devoutly believed by the people in the house, by visits of Mrs. Surratt's 'haunt.'"

John A. Bingham, ex-minister to Japan, ex-congressman, and the prosecutor of Lincoln's slayers, died at his home in Cadiz, O., aged 85 years. 3. 28 1890.

Judge Holt was not the last surviving member of the military commission that tried President Lincoln's assassins. John A. Bingham who was for years in Congress, and afterwards served as Minister to Japan, is still living at his home in Ohio. 1894

### CALLS MRS. SURRATT INNOCENT

#### Ben Pitman Defends Woman Hanged as Accessory to Lincoln Assassin.

CINCINNATI, OHIO, February 12.—Almost fifty years after the assassination of Abraham Lincoln the pen of Ben Pitman, pioneer of stenography, who acted as official stenographer at the trial of the conspirators, has revealed facts supporting his belief that Mrs. Mary Surratt, the woman hanged with three other conspirators, was innocent of the crime for which she was executed.

The statement was written by Pitman just before his death in Cincinnati a year ago, and appears in the March issue of a Cincinnati magazine. A portion of Pitman's statement is:

1892  
"That Mrs. Surratt, who was hanged with three male conspirators concerned in a plot to assassinate President Lincoln and other government officials, was entirely innocent of any prior knowledge of or participation in those crimes, is, to my mind, beyond question."

### TESTIFIED AGAINST MRS. SURRATT.

Death of a Man at Washington Whose Evidence Hanged a Woman. 1892

WASHINGTON, D. C., Dec. 22.—One of the witnesses in the Surratt trial, an ex-policeman named Lloyd, has just died in this city at the age of 68. About December 1, 1864, he rented the old Surratt Tavern at Surrattsville, Md., and when the assassination of Lincoln occurred he was the landlord of that hostelry. Mrs. Surratt was a frequent visitor to the estate, as were also Herold, Atzerodt and others of the Lincoln assassination conspiracy. Here it was that rifles, ammunition and rations were kept ready for Wilkes Booth when he made his escape across the eastern branch after firing the fatal shot in Ford's Opera House. Lloyd was the principal witness against Mrs. Surratt in the trial which followed. Although his testimony was most damaging to Mrs. Surratt and probably condemned her, he himself never believed in Mrs. Surratt's guilt. After the war Lloyd settled in this city and was one of the pioneer members of the Metropolitan police force.

Benn Pitman, the phonographer at the trial, agrees with Manager Ford in believing that Mrs. Surratt had no knowledge of the plot to assassinate Lincoln. He also tells the interesting fact that, just after the assassination, Stanton ordered every letter that passed through the Washington postoffice addressed to Canada to be opened, in the vain hope of finding the supposed southern investigators of the plot.—October 2, 1879.

## DEFENDS MRS. SURRETT.

Paper Prepared by Rev. Walter, Who Was Her Confessor.

Special Dispatch to the Globe-Democrat.

WASHINGTON, D. C., May 25.—Rev. J. A. Walter, pastor of St. Patrick's Church, this city, has prepared and presented to the Catholic Historical Society, of New York, a paper on Mrs. Surratt, which he thinks will throw new light upon the character, trial and execution of that unfortunate woman. It will be read before the society to-morrow night. Father Walter was pastor of St. Patrick's Church when President Lincoln was assassinated, and Mrs. Surratt was a member of his congregation. On the very night that Booth fired the fatal shot she was at Father Walter's church, and that circumstance alone, in the mind of the clergyman, was partial proof that she knew nothing of the plans prepared by the assassins at her house. He became deeply interested in her case, was her confessor and adviser after her arrest as well as before, and did everything in his power, both by appeals to President Johnson and by bitter denunciations of the unjust measures adopted by the Government in its prosecution, to save her from the gallows. Although the occurrences which Father Walter describes in his paper occurred so long ago, he still feels freshly and keenly the injustice which led to Mrs. Surratt's execution. In speaking of the matter he said:

"If President Johnson had been a man of courage the execution would not have taken place. He simply acted in accordance with public clamor, and signed the death warrant without even reading the testimony on which the woman had been convicted. I went to him and told him that I had read every line of the testimony, and that there was not enough evidence to hang a cat on; that I did not ask a pardon for Mrs. Surratt nor a commutation of sentence, but merely a reprieve for ten days, in order that I might prove her innocence, but President Johnson did not have courage enough to comply with my request. He feared if he did so he would be accused of commending the deed that had put him in the presidential chair. So he consigned an innocent woman to a shameful death in order to escape the adverse criticism of a frenzied populace. The whole trial was an outrage, and there is no doubt that the Government resorted to fraudulent measures in order to obtain a conviction. Mr. Bradley, who defended John Surratt, had among his papers a telegraph book, showing that John Surratt was in Elmira on the night of April 13, yet when a search was made for the hotel register, that would have shown his presence there on that date, it had disappeared, and not until a year ago was I able to ascertain that the Government had taken possession of it, and had withheld it in order to deprive the prisoner of the benefit of this bit of evidence. John Surratt was allowed to escape a trial because the Government knew it had no case against him, and if he were innocent, his mother was also. It has been charged that I forbade Mrs. Surratt's speaking, but this is not true. She declared her innocence up to the time of her death, and beyond this declaration she had nothing to say."

## MRS. SURRETT'S "OLD AUNTY."

Rachel Hawkins Tells Incidents Connected with Lincoln's Assassination. Special Dispatch to the Globe-Democrat.

WASHINGTON, D. C., December 21.—Aunt Rachel Hawkins was a slave in the Surratt family. She lives in a little house in the southwestern part of Washington. She is "pretty low," and divides her time between reminiscent talks and the telling of her prayer beads. She is a devout Catholic. She likes to be addressed as Aunty. It sounds like "old times." Aunt Rachel is never so happy as when to an attentive listener she is recounting the incidents of the sensational period of the war. She teems with them. Her memory is vigorous, and although a little off on dates she is usually able to indicate the time by associating it with some prominent event.

Aunt Rachel was born, "Why, bress yo' heart, honey, de Lawd only knows when." She first belonged to the family of Cornelius Wildman and subsequently to that of Sylvester Boon. In the year that John Brown was hanged she began her servitude with Mrs. Surratt. She was the house servant at the homestead at Surrattsville, now Clinton, Md. Here she was wedded to one of the slaves of Walter P. Griffin, the father-in-law of Sydney E. Mudd. She remained with the Surratt family till the close of the war, when she moved to Washington. She has never been in Maryland since. She speaks tenderly of her former mistress, and says Mrs. Surratt always treated her like one of the children. Mrs. Surratt was kind-hearted and would not do hurt to a soul.

"Dere were Marse John and Missus Annie, who tended school down at Bryantown in Charles County, and Marse Isaac, who runned away to Texas. It wasn't long after the death of John Surratt, Sr., continued the auntie, "when Mrs. Surratt removed to Washington and left the farm in charge of Mr. John Lloyd. J. Wilkes Booth and Dave Herold used to come down often, and they and Mr. Lloyd were 'mighty thick.' Mrs. Surratt visited the country home but seldom. Booth used to recite by way of practice, and frequently paced the floor while rehearsing lines. He was a very fine gentleman, and a great favorite with the servants because of his liberality."

On the morning of Good Friday, 1865, while coming to town she met Mrs. Surratt and Booth, who were on the down road. She remembered this particularly, because the couple were in a very small buggy, drawn by a milk-white horse. The meeting occurred at the top of Good Hope Hill. They returned to Washington the same day, and that night the assassination of Lincoln took place. The kitchen where she was most employed adjoined the pantry where the guns were afterward found, and she had several times heard Booth and Lloyd in there, but did not know what for. She was over at Mr. Griffin's when the soldiers took possession of the place and ransacked things.

Nobody can persuade Aunt Rachel but that Mrs. Surratt was innocent of the crime for which she was hanged. Any suggestion of that sort is apt to arouse her ire.

## WHEN LINCOLN WAS SHOT.

Mrs. Surratt's Waiter Boy Tells What He Knows.

Nathaniel Simms, who in the early 60's was Mrs. Mary E. Surratt's colored waiter boy, lives north of Oxford, Pa. He is a native of Prince George's county, Maryland. Simms says when 14 years of age he was bound out to Mrs. Surratt, there being seven other colored boys on the place. He tells, in the Philadelphia Inquirer, the following respecting his mistress:

"The missis lived at Surrattsville, about seven miles from Washington, and, being a lady of wealth, owned considerable of the village. She possessed fine features and a temperament that was excitable. Her favorite hobby was riding horseback. I have seen her put one hand on the saddle pommel and vault up into the seat without assistance. Mrs. Surratt was fond of wine. She could wield a rawhide with vigor, and it always came upon the backs of us boys so unexpectedly.

"She entertained frequently. John Wilkes Booth was a frequent visitor at the house, he being very intimate with my mistress' son, John Surratt. Booth, a kind of helpless fellow, required a good deal of waiting on, and from him I received my first money I could say was mine. About two months before the taking off of President Lincoln Booth was at the Surratt mansion steady. A few days before the shooting of the president, Mrs. Surratt and I went into Washington, and she bought nine or twelve pistols at a gunsmith's. They were put in a little coffin, which the undertaker hauled in his hearse across the eastern branch bridge. The guards supposed it was a funeral, and made no attempt at searching. Mrs. Surratt, after reaching home, hung the pistols around on the walls of her room.

"On the night of the assassination Booth and John Surratt ate supper together and left the house. About midnight Booth returned, and I heard Mrs. Surratt clap her hands and exclaim, 'I'm glad the old rebel is dead'—meaning our noble Lincoln. That same night I helped Booth into the saddle, and he shot down the pike as if demons were after him. On opening the house next morning I was surprised to see the piazza and yard full of soldiers. One of them asked if Booth had been at the house during the night, and I replied that he had. In a short time my mistress and all hands about the place were taken into Washington."—Washington Star.



## SURRATT IN CANADA.

Once having found an asylum in Canada, Surratt secured funds and remained in Montreal for some time. Feeling that he could not long remain secreted with the American detectives swarming in Canada, Surratt took passage for England and from there went to Rome. He enlisted in the

\*This statement is doubtless correct when applied to Baltimore and Maryland, but in Indiana the number of people who so believe is very limited.—Editor Journal.

## EFFORTS TO SAVE MRS. SURRATT.

### President Johnson Refused to Stay Execution.

Great interest has always centered about the case of Mrs. Mary E. Surratt, and there are many firm believers in her innocence of any criminal knowledge concerning the assassination plot. In years after the close of the war, when the bitterness of that great strife had passed away, much publicity was given her case from time to time, and many of those who were connected with the trial in official capacity were made the centers of attack.

Mr. John P. Brophy, who was at the time of the trial an instructor in St. Aloysius's College in Washington, had an interesting experience in endeavoring to aid Mrs. Surratt. After her conviction for complicity in the murder, Welchman, who boarded in her house and was the chief witness against her, came to him and said that, in spite of all he had sworn to, he thoroughly believed Mrs. Surratt was innocent of all knowledge of the plot against the President until after its actual consummation. Mr. Brophy deemed Welchman's statement so important that he reduced it to writing and sent it to President Johnson as at least worthy of investigation.

To his communication he got no reply, but on the night before the execution he received from the War Department a permit to visit Mrs. Surratt in the arsenal, where, with the three other condemned prisoners, she was confined. Mr. Brophy had not asked for any such permit, and he has always supposed that Mrs. Surratt heard of his action in her behalf and herself made the request that he be allowed to see her.

### MET MRS. SURRATT.

Mr. Brophy went to the arsenal. Mrs. Surratt asked him to undertake at some future time, when the passions of the war were cooled, the task of clearing her name of the crime for which she then stood condemned and of which she earnestly protested her innocence. This Mr. Brophy promised to do. After leaving her he went to see Lewis Payne Powell, known throughout the conspiracy as Lewis Payne. Powell, who was the son of a Florida clergyman, was, after Booth, the fiercest and most bloodthirsty of all the conspirators. He retained to the last the stoical cynicism which he had shown from the first. In this mood Mr. Brophy found him a few hours before he was hanged.

To his own impending fate he told Mr. Brophy he was utterly indifferent. He had played his part in the tragedy, and was ready to take the consequences of an act which he in no way regretted.

But when he spoke of Mrs. Surratt all trace of affectation disappeared. That woman, he protested by all that he held most sacred, was as innocent of the plot against Mr. Lincoln as the child unborn. Powell's manner was so earnest and so convincing that it made a profound impression upon Mr. Brophy.

It was now about 9 o'clock in the morning. The execution was to take place between 11 a. m. and 1 p. m. Mr. Brophy, from Powell's cell, hurried straight to General Hartranft, afterward Governor of Pennsylvania, and then the provost marshal general in having full charge of the execution. He earnestly besought General Hartranft to go to Powell and hear what he had to say. This General Hartranft did, and he came back impressed quite as Mr. Brophy had been.

In a subsequent letter, according to the publication, Mr. Arnold says, in part:

"My guilt was but a thought; the government made it a crime. Thoughts exist in the minds of men, but remain dormant, never coming to the surface, never executed, hence to make such a crime, in my particular case, would make it criminal in the case of all. However, such a thing will not hold good in law. In my statement I deal with facts alone—indisputable facts. They describe the horrible tortures inflicted before, during and after trial, in fact condemned before any kind of evidence had been adduced before the court. It also describes the dreadful scenes witnessed during my incarceration at the Dry Tortugas, giving in detail those acts, besides the officers who perpetrated them.

"Neither malice nor prejudice prompts my action. No man in this land loves his country more than I do. None are more truthful, possessing a heart of kindness and tenderness, equal to that of a woman. I can produce witnesses of the very best blood and standing in the State to vouch for my manhood. They have known me from my earliest boyhood, and can vouch for my purity of heart. To-day in my old age I am by them respected and loved.

"The cloud which for nearly forty years had hung over my head prevented me from obtaining lucrative employment, besides it so shadowed my life that I had almost become a misanthrope. I was never better satisfied than in my own seclusion and retirement. My treatment had been of such a nature that I had no desire to mix with mankind. I had lost all confidence in the human race. Now going on sixty-nine years of age, my health is shattered and crippled from rheumatism contracted during my incarceration. I have passed the age to ever find employment to bridge over the short span between the present and my death."

### PLOTS THAT FAILED.

The manuscript of Arnold, in relation to its preparation, extends over a long period of years. That portion in which a most interesting account is given of the inception of the plots to kidnap President Lincoln, with their successive failures and the reasons therefore, giving names, dates and locations connected therewith, was written in the year 1867, while Arnold was confined in the Dry Tortugas, Fla., and attested before a notary of the public and a special commissioner appointed by the congressional commission to investigate into the circumstances surrounding the assassination of the President. A second portion of the same document gives a succession of questions put to Arnold as to his life, etc., by the notary public.

At that time the writings stopped for many years, but in the early nineties Mr. Arnold began the task of writing the entire story of his life. With painstaking efforts he placed in black and white a graphic story, dealing with the entire subject at hand, and recorded events that to the mind of the present seem too terrible to be real. The clear cut, even and legible chirography, together with the nature of the subject matter, with its plainly, carefully weighed, yet pointed construction, all give a key to the character of the writer.

After his release from the Dry Tortugas, Arnold, seeking seclusion and retirement, dropped from the public eye, and even in Baltimore but little was known of him in recent years. Until six years ago he resided in this city, and to those who did find him he always refused to open his lips. The knowledge that he had prepared a statement of his experiences to be given out after his death was prevalent in a narrow circle at first, and gradually, without even knowing where Arnold was to be found, it extended to other parts of the country.

### RECALLED BY A DEATH.

Some weeks ago another Samuel Arnold died in Anne Arundel county, Maryland, and the story was erroneously published in some parts of the country that the Arnold of the Lincoln conspiracy had passed away. Telegrams immediately reached the American from every part of the country asking that the last statement of Arnold be forwarded to various papers, and this produced inquiries which led to the establishment of the fact that Samuel Bland Arnold was still alive, living quietly on a farm in an out-of-the-way portion of Maryland.

Of the eight men who, according to the story of Arnold, conspired together to abduct President Lincoln, but two now live—Arnold and Mr. John H. Surratt, who now lives in this city. Mr. Surratt is the son of Mrs. Mary E. Surratt, who was one of those hanged in the arsenal at Washington for the murder of the martyred President, and who is now generally looked upon as having been innocent of the crime for which she suffered the death penalty.\*



John Wilkes Booth, the actual murderer of Lincoln, was shot and killed when captured in a barn in northern Virginia. David E. Herold, who was captured with him, and Lewis Payne and George A. Atzerodt went to their death on the scaffold with Mrs. Surratt. Samuel B. Arnold, Dr. Samuel A. Mudd, Michael O'Laughlin and Edward Spangler were tried for the murder of the President with the others, and were sentenced to life imprisonment in the Dry Tortugas. Arnold alone lives of these men, all of whom were pardoned by President Johnson in 1869.

Surratt, the only other living conspirator, according to the story of Arnold, fled the country after the assassination of President Lincoln. Surratt was in Elmira, N. Y., when the assassination took place, and he vanished from sight in spite of the utmost endeavors of the government detectives to arrest him and was not heard of again for two years. Without him in his pocket Surratt, with an unknown companion, reached St. Albans, Vt., then walked to Franklin, on the other side of the line.

"I will furnish you an army conveyance and swift horses," he said. "Take it and drive like mad to the White House and give the President this note. I will delay the execution until the last moment, or until I hear from you definitely and positively what the President's answer is."

#### PLAN FOR REPRIEVE.

The note was a strong plea for a reprieve for Mrs. Surratt. With it in his pocket Mr. Brophy drove in a gallop to the White House. Here about the first person he saw was Miss Anna Surratt, daughter of the condemned woman, who for hours had been at the executive mansion trying to get access to the President to plead for her mother's life.

Two men barred the way to all who wished to get at President Johnson. These were Preston Kling and Gen. James Lane. President Johnson was suspected of having a vacillating nature and those who believed that justice had been done in the conviction of the conspirators did not want an appeal to the weak side of the President's character to succeed.

Mr. Brophy tried to get past the guards but tried in vain. He tried to get General Hartranft's note sent in to the President.

In that also he failed. After nearly an hour's delay he was no nearer doing his errand of life and death than when he first arrived. His own half-distracted frame of mind was intensified by the frantic entreaties of Miss Surratt, who, sobbing and choking with grief, was clinging to him and begging him to do something.

But what could he do? In every avenue that led toward the President there was a gleaming bayonet and behind the bayonet the stern bronzed face of a soldier. Mr. Brophy was at the verge of despair when suddenly a fine carriage came dashing up to the White House entrance and out of it hurried a richly-dressed and strikingly handsome woman, the beautiful Mrs. Stephen A. Douglas, wife of Lincoln's old-time rival out in Illinois, the Little Giant.

#### DASHED ON BAYONETS.

Mrs. Douglas, too, had come to plead Mrs. Surratt's case. Mr. Brophy was by her side in an instant telling her his errand and entreating her to get him access to the President. Mrs. Douglas was a woman of resolution and furthermore a dazzlingly beautiful woman. She dashed straight at the bayonets and they lowered almost in homage before her.

The civilian guards beyond the bayonets tried to stop her, but she swept them scornfully aside with an imperious gesture. What no one else in all that crucial forenoon could do was precisely the thing which Mrs. Douglas did. She got to the President.

But there her triumph ceased. She entered the room with her face flushed with energy and hope. She came out of it with bitter, hopeless disappointment in her every feature and every movement. She looked at the convulsed, tear-stained face of the young girl whose mother's life was trembling in the balance and could only shake her head.

"Oh, don't give up so!" sobbed Miss Surratt. "Don't! Don't! Oh, do go to him again. He won't refuse you. He can't. Do go to him again!"

"Show him General Hartranft's note again," cried Mr. Brophy. "Ask him if he got the statement I sent him of Welchman's confession to me. Make another appeal to him, Mrs. Douglas."

"I will," said the spirited woman. "I will; it is of little use, though. I feel that it is of little use."

#### THE FINAL FAILURE.

Past the bayonets, past the guards, she once more forced her way to the President's presence. But she had predicted truly when she said that it was of little use. There was no vacillation in Johnson now. He firmly and positively refused to intervene. The statement of Welchman, he said, had come to him. It was wholly without weight. With this reply Mrs. Douglas came back.

"We have done what we could, Miss Surratt," said Mr. Brophy to the half-dazed girl. "Come with me if you would see your mother again while she lives."

So into the army carriage waiting at the door Miss Surratt and Mr. Brophy got and again there was a mad gallop through the Washington streets. They were all but deserted. For all of Washington at that hour there was just one magnet—the arsenal, where Lincoln's murder was to be avenged. The crowd that surged around the building reached blocks away and was impenetrable. Mr. Brophy's carriage was brought up sharply at its outer borders. It was a complete blockade. There was no budging an inch.

Meantime, the minutes were flying. The time which would mark the limit when mother and daughter never would meet again this side of the grave was close at hand. For Miss Surratt and her companion it was a moment of agony as trying as the long wait at the President's door. Once more it seemed a case for sheer despair and once more a carriage came dashing up to the rescue.

#### A TEAR-STAINED FACE.

There was a clattering of horses' hoofs, and when Mr. Brophy turned in the direction from which it came he saw a guard of cavalry galloping on each side of a swiftly approaching carriage, in which appeared the handsome, soldierly face of General Hancock, then the general in command at Washington. The general saw the confusion about Brophy's carriage, recognized the army vehicle, and saw the tear-stained, distracted face of a woman.

He brought his cavalcade to an instant halt. He then left his own carriage, walked to that of Miss Surratt, and, hat in hand and with the chivalrous dignity which sat so well upon him, asked what the trouble was and what he could do. Mr. Brophy briefly explained that it was Miss Surratt trying to speak to her mother once more on earth. The soldier's face flushed, and Mr. Brophy is sure there was something very like tears in his eyes as he grasped the pathetic situation.

#### HAD LARGE INCOME.

Booth said he would furnish all the necessary materials to carry out the project. He showed me the different entries in his diary, of what his engagements paid him in his profession, and I judge from what I have heard his income therefrom to have been \$25,000 to \$30,000. He also informed me that he owned property in the oil regions of Pennsylvania and Boston. He was taken sick while at home, and upon his recovery he arranged his business and went to the oil regions, from which place he wrote me, inclosed \$20 for expenses, requesting me to look around and pick out a horse for him.

This was all the money I ever received from Booth, or any other person in connection with the undertaking. He went from the oil regions to Canada, and shipped his wardrobe to Nassau, as he afterwards informed me. Booth returned to Baltimore some time in November or December, 1864. He had purchased, whilst North, some arms to defend himself in case of pursuit, viz.: two carbines, three pairs of revolvers, three knives and two pairs of handcuffs. Fearful that the weight of his trunk might attract attention, he asked me to take part of them, which I did, and sent them to him by express to Washington.

A short time after his return from Canada to Baltimore, he went to the lower counties of Maryland, bordering on the Potomac, as he said, for the purpose of purchasing horses and boats. I met him in Baltimore in January, I think, at which time he purchased the horse I had selected for him. He also purchased a buggy and harness, and said that all was completed and ready to work. I informed my parents that I was in the oil business with Booth, to prevent them from knowing the true cause of my association with Booth. O'Laughlin and I drove the buggy to Washington. This was sometime in the latter part of December, 1864, or the early part of January, 1865.

#### EARLY PREPARATIONS.

We left the horse at Nallor's livery stable, on the avenue, near Thirteenth street, and we went to Rullman's Hotel (kept by Lichau), on Pennsylvania avenue. We remained there a few days and then went to Mitchell's Hotel, near Grover's Theater, and remained a few days. We went from there and rented a room from Mrs. Van Tyne, 420 D street, and obtained our meals at the Franklin Hotel, at the corner of D and Eighth streets. We remained there, off and on, until March 20, 1865, during which time I frequently went to Baltimore—nearly every Saturday. O'Laughlin, as a general thing, went and returned with me on these visits.

When in Baltimore I remained at my father's home. When in Washington I spent most of my time at Rullman's Hotel (kept by Lichau), on Pennsylvania avenue, at which place O'Laughlin and myself had acquaintances.

The President having ceased visiting the Soldiers' Home, Booth proposed a plan to abduct him from the theater, by carrying him back off the stage by the back entrance, place him in a buggy which he was to have in attendance, and during the confusion which would be produced by the turning off of the gas, make good our escape. I objected to any such arrangement, and plainly pointed out its utter impracticability and told Booth it could not be accomplished. He would listen to no argument I could bring forth, and seemed resolved in carrying out this mad scheme. He endeavored to obtain a man from New York to turn off the gas. In this he failed—so he informed me.



## THE CASE OF MRS. SURRETT.

### Welchmann's Testimony Did Not Convict Her of Complicity in Lincoln's Murder—A Letter From One of Her Judges.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—Sir: I notice in a recent issue of THE SUN that Mr. J. J. Welchmann, who was a prominent witness for the Government in the conspiracy trials of 1865 and 1867, has been made the object of an attack by Mr. J. P. Brophy of your city.

Mr. Brophy's statement is quite true that Mr. Welchmann had no information whatever that Mrs. Surratt or any member of her family were involved in the conspiracy in any way, and he has never said to the contrary. When he took the witness stand in 1865, he felt that his evidence would not criminate her, and that she was entirely innocent so far as he knew.

The remarkable cross-examination, which follows, is confirmatory of this, and I ask you in all justice to a very worthy man to publish it:

Cross-examination by Mr. Johnson: Q. During the whole of that period, you never heard him (Surratt) intimate that it was his purpose, or that there was a purpose to assassinate the President? A. Never, sir.

Q. You never heard him say anything on the subject, or anybody else during the whole period from November until the assassination? A. No, sir.

Q. During the whole of that period what was her (Mrs. Surratt's) character? A. It was excellent; I have known her since 1863.

Q. You have been living at her house since November? A. Since November.

Q. During the whole of that time, as far as you could judge, was her character apparently good and amiable? A. Her character was exemplary and ladylike in every particular.

Q. Was she a member of the church? A. Yes, sir.

Q. A regular attendant? A. Yes, sir.  
Q. Of the Catholic Church? A. Yes, sir.  
Q. Are you a Catholic? A. Yes, sir; I am a Catholic.

Q. Have you been to church with her? A. I generally accompanied her to church every Sunday.

Q. As far then, as you can judge, her conduct in a religious and in a moral sense was altogether exemplary? A. Yes, sir; she went to her religious duties, at least, every two weeks.

Q. Then, if I understand you, from November up to the 14th of April, whenever she was here, she was regular in her attendance at her own church, and apparently as far as you could judge doing all her duties to God and to man? A. Yes, sir.

By Foster: Q. You do not know of any conversation that passed between Atzerodt and Booth or between Atzerodt and Payne having reference to a conspiracy? A. No, sir.

Q. Have you ever heard any conversation having reference to Payne's assignment to the assassination of the Secretary of State? A. No, sir.

By Aiken: Q. What was your object in being so swift to give all this information? A. My object was to assist the Government.

Q. Were any threats made to you by any officer of the Government in case you did not divulge? A. No, sir; no threats at all.

Q. Any inducements? A. No, sir; no inducements at all. I myself had a great deal to fear. Being in this house where these people were, I knew that I would be brought into public notice, but as for myself being cognizant of anything of this kind, I had no fears at all for I was not cognizant. When I surrendered myself to the Government I surrendered myself because I thought it was my duty. It was hard for me to do so situated as I was with Mrs. Surratt and her family, and with John Surratt, but it was my duty, and my duty I have always regarded it since.

I had not a word of private conversation with these people which I would not be willing to have the world hear.

Q. You state that all the prisoners at the bar were free and unreserved in your presence in their conversation? A. They spoke in my presence on general topics, and so on; but as to their private conversation they never spoke to me.

Q. Do I understand you as stating to the court that in all your conversation with them you never learned of any intended treasonable purpose or act or conspiracy of theirs? A. No, sir.

Q. You never did? A. No, sir.

Q. You were not suspicious of anything of the sort? A. I would have been the last man in the world to suspect John Surratt, my schoolmate, of the murder of the President of the United States. I looked upon Atzerodt, as did every one in the house, as a good-hearted countryman.

Q. And did you still profess to be a friend of his (John H. Surratt) at the time you were giving this information to the War Department that you speak of? A. I was a friend as far as he, himself, was concerned; but when my suspicions as to the danger of the Government, in any particular, were concerned I preferred the Government to John Surratt. I did not know what he was contemplating. He said he was going to engage in cotton speculation; he was going to engage in oil.

Q. If you did not know what he was contemplating how could you forfeit your friendship to him? What is the rationale of that? A. I never forfeited my friendship to him; he forfeited his friendship to me.

Q. Not by engaging in the cotton speculation? A. No, sir; by placing me in the position in which I now am—testifying against him.

Now let me say in all candor, and I speak by the record as a member of the commission, that it was not Welchmann's evidence at all that condemned Mrs. Surratt, and it is high time that the world should know it. Had it depended on what he said not a hair of her head would have been harmed.

The man who did the mischief was John M. Lloyd, who was charged by the Government in 1867 with being in the conspiracy himself. He had rented Mrs. Surratt's property at Surrattsville in December, 1864.

He testified that Mrs. Surratt came to his place on the afternoon of April 14, and had an interview alone with him in his back yard, near the woodpile; that she then and there gave him Booth's field glass, and at the same time told him to have the "shooting irons" ready (carbines) and two bottles of whiskey to be given to the parties who would call for them. Sure enough, at 12 o'clock, Herold and Booth came dashing down to Lloyd's. Herold crying out, "Lloyd, for God's sake make haste and get those things," and Lloyd brought out the two carbines, the two bottles of whiskey and the field glass. "I can take only one of the carbines," shouted Booth, "I have broken my leg," and then as he rode away, he said, "Lloyd, I will tell you some news; we have murdered the President, and assassinated the Secretary of State."

That was the principal evidence, the one chief overt act of which Mrs. Surratt was shown to have been guilty, and in all these thirty years it has not been disproved, nor is it possible to disprove it. Who told

that those deadly shooting irons were secreted there? Who informed her that they would be wanted that night? Who but Booth who had met her in her parlor before she left for the country? What was she doing there at all?

The evidence further showed that three weeks before the assassination, about March 23, her own son, David Herold and George A. Atzerodt had secreted them at Mr. Lloyd's place, and against his protest.

Mrs. Surratt tells Welchmann that she is going down into the country to see about collecting a debt due her by one Mr. Nothy; yet she does not see Nothy at all, does not go near him, although he lived only three miles further away. She had seen him about this matter the Tuesday before, April 11, and had an interview of two hours with him. Her excuse to Mr. Welchmann was a blind to deceive him as to the nature of her real business, and his answer to the Secretary of War, who questioned him very sternly about this, was that "she had told him that she was going down there about this debt due her."

But there was other evidence. It will be remembered that on the night of April 17 Payne returned to her house, with pickaxe on his shoulder and cap made from his shirt sleeve on his head, just at the time when she was about to be arrested, and when she was confronted with him, at a distance of only two paces, she denied with sacred oath and uplifted hand that she knew him. (Testimony of three War Department officers—Wemmerskirch, Morgan and Major Smith.)

Yet this very man, the brutal assailant of Mr. Seward with the red stains of blood still on his clothing, and standing in Booth's boots, had, according to the testimony of every one in the house, been there twice, answering to different names, and on the last occasion taking his meals at her table, and at her very side, for four days, and still she did not know him.

The very act of this red-handed murderer fleeing to her home at such a time, was in itself, the strongest and most damning evidence against her.

Take away these two items of evidence—the terrible story of the shooting irons and Payne's return, wipe them out, remove them from the record, and Mr. Welchmann's evidence as to what he saw and heard in Mrs. Surratt's house during the four months he was there falls harmlessly to the ground.

I do not know that Mr. Welchmann needs any vindication at my hands. Of him the prosecution said in 1865, that "the defence had not contradicted a single fact to which he had testified, nor had they found a single breath of suspicion against his character."

A higher tribute was never paid a man under such trying circumstances.

Is it not time, Mr. Editor, that these lies and misrepresentations about this case should cease? I remember reading in the papers at various periods how all the members of the commission had come to untimely ends; yet the truth is there is not a member of that commission who has failed to reach the age of 70. Gen. David Hunter died at the age of 82; Gen. Ekin at 71; Gen. Howe at 79; Gens. Kautz and Clendennin over 70.

Of the living, Lew Wallace is 75, Foster and Col. Tompkins over 70, and here I am at 88. Judge Bingham died last year at the age of 82, Judge Advocate General Holt died in 1894 at 87, and Judge Burnett, the only remaining Judge Advocate of the trial, is 63, and is doing splendid work as the attorney of the Southern District of New York.

I remember, how, too, for more than ten years the story was circulated that Stanton had cut his throat, a falsehood that had its run until Gen. Barnes, whose hand had rested on Stanton's last heart beat, contradicted it.

Then again came the story that Judge Advocate General Holt had suppressed the recommendation for mercy in Mrs. Surratt's case. That had its run for thirty years, and ended only when Holt was laid to rest.

It is only as Welchmann's testimony is supplemented by that of other witnesses that it had any importance in the minds of the commission. A true and careful history of that trial has been published and is accessible to any who desire correct historical information in regard to that great tragedy in our national life.

I will close this paper by saying that one of the severest things in this whole case has been said by John Surratt himself. In a lecture delivered in December, 1870, he tells us how in March, 1865, he, Booth, Payne, Herold, Atzerodt, O'Laughlin and Arnold started out to capture the President at the Soldiers' Home, when a play purposely arranged, in which Lester Wallack, E. L. Davenport and John Matthews were to act, was to be given. He states how the President at the last moment was detained, but sent Mr. Chase, the Secretary of the Treasury, in his place. He tells us further how much they were disappointed; they did not want him, they wanted a bigger chase.

He informs us that the President was to be seized at the close of the play and that he was to be driven in his coach to lower Maryland, but he does not tell us that he was to do the driving. That was left for Atzerodt to reveal in his confession. Had John H. Surratt then done his whole duty in exposing the matter to Mr. Stanton, the tragic occurrences of April 14 would have had no place in our history. Respectfully,

T. M. HARRIS.  
Member of the Commission.

**Mrs. Surratt's Executioner Insane.**

GRAND RAPIDS, MICH., April 7.—Capt. Chris Rath, who hanged Mrs. Surratt and the other Lincoln conspirators, in Washington, was suddenly bereft of reason yesterday on the run to Jackson with the mail train. He has been mail agent for twenty years between here and Jackson, and made the latter place his headquarters. Last night it was noticed that he did not throw the mail off, and an investigation found him in the car surrounded by the bags staring wildly at vacancy. He was Provost of Washington at the close of the war, and retained a vivid recollection of the hanging of the conspirators. 1892

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**HELPED HANG MRS. SURRATT**

**J. T. Murdock, Who Assisted in Execution of Lincoln Conspirators, Dies at Streator, Ill.** 1892

Streator, Ill., Dec. 24.—J. T. Murdock, a veteran lawyer of this city, who, while stationed with Hancock's Veteran corps at Washington, near the close of the Civil war, was one of the special detail which had charge of the execution of Mrs. Surratt and the other conspirators in the assassination of President Lincoln, is dead here. He was also present at the execution of the notorious Captain Wirtz, commander of Andersonville prison.



# Capt. Rath Gives His Now Details of the Quadruple Execution. 1892

[From the Chicago Blade.]

The report that Capt. Chris Rath, for nearly a quarter of a century a mail agent on the Michigan Central, has become insane, is without foundation, writes a correspondent from Grand Rapids, Mich. He has recently been suffering from a carbuncle on the back of his neck. Last week, against the advice of his physician, he returned to his duties on the road. His run is from Detroit to this city by way of Jackson. He reached this city all right, but on the return trip was overcome by weakness and had to give up. He is now at his home in Jackson, and hopes to be able to be out again in a few days.

Capt. Rath was provost in charge of the Washington prison under Gen. Hartranft at the time of Lincoln's assassination, and conducted the execution of Mrs. Surratt and the three other conspirators. Before the war he was a sailor in the United States navy. When the war broke out he enlisted in the 17th Michigan Infantry. Afterward he raised a company of twenty-two men, and received a commission as Second Lieutenant, and was attached to Capt. John Goldsmith's command under Col. Withington. He served with distinction throughout the war, being promoted to Captain.

"I conducted the execution of the four leaders," he says. "They were Mrs. Surratt, who kept the boarding house where the conspiracy was hatched; Louis Payne Powell, the son of a Baptist clergyman, who attempted to assassinate Secretary Stanton; Harold and Atzerott, who tried to kill other members of the Cabinet. The prison was comparatively a small building surrounded by a yard of about an acre and a half of ground. The prisoners were confined in separate cells on the first floor, and above was the court room where the trial was held. The conspirators were held several weeks before they were finally disposed of."

"I frequently mingled with them and allowed the men to go into the yard to exercise and play quoits. I knew they were guilty from what I overheard them say when they were together. Mrs. Surratt kept her cell most of the time. Her daughter Anna, then 16 years old, was allowed to visit her mother at pleasure."

"The sentences of death were pronounced upon the prisoners the day before the execution. They took it calmly, but the following morning, just before the execution, they showed signs of emotion—all except Powell, who was unmoved to the very last."

"Mrs. Surratt expected a reprieve, and we all hoped she would get it. Powell made a statement exonerating her from any complicity in the plot, and said if he had two lives he would willingly give both to save hers. This statement was forwarded to Secretary Stanton, who ordered an investigation, but in the meantime the woman's counsel got out some civil papers to prevent the execution. That settled her fate, and she died with the rest."

"The scaffold was erected in the jail yard, near the building. The platform was 20 feet above the ground and 20 feet square. It was furnished with two double drops. The rope was three-fourths of inch, twenty-one strands, Boston hemp. I purchased it myself, made the nooses and arranged all the details of the execution. The men employed about the prison almost revolted when ordered to build the scaffold. One old guard, who had been in the service all his life, fairly wept. The work was finally performed by a detail of soldiers. The graves were dug in front of the scaffold opposite where the four would take their last view of the world, and in plain sight."

"The execution took place at 2 o'clock in the afternoon. The prisoners were conducted to the scaffold, each by an officer. Mrs. Surratt was escorted by a Major and held the place of honor—if there be such a place on a scaffold—at the extreme right. Then came Powell, Atzerott and Harold. Only the reporters, a Catholic priest for Mrs. Surratt, Gen. Hancock and myself were on the platform. The invalid guard and a regiment of Michigan troops guarded the walls. There were no spectators."

"I covered the faces of the doomed quartet with masks made out of an old shelter tent, and tied their hands and legs to prevent any struggling. Powell was a tall man, with a thick bull neck; he looked a brutal fellow, but had a voice as soft as any woman. I noticed the rope in his case was not properly adjusted, and stepping up said: 'Excuse me, but I will fix this rope so that you will die easier.' 'All right; you know what is best,' he answered. I gave the signal for the man to knock the props from under the drops by clapping my hands three times. The drop was 10 feet and death was instantaneous. All four went off together and they died without a struggle. After fifteen minutes the bodies were cut down and buried in the graves provided for them. The Catholics intended to bury Mrs. Surratt with some ceremony, but with the bad feeling then prevailing it was thought best not to permit it. The bodies were afterward removed by their friends and interred outside."

"Mrs. Surratt was dressed in a plain black dress on the scaffold and was buoyed up by the hope of a reprieve to the very last minute. Her daughter Anna was with her the night before the execution."

"I attended the burial of Wilkes Booth and assisted in the secret interment of the body under the chapel in the prison. The body was removed from the first resting place in the navy yard one dark night, and on a monitor was taken by a small guard consisting of myself and two or three others up the Chesapeake Bay to the Arsenal. We buried the body under the floor of the prison chapel. When Booth's brother was in the court room during the trial of the other conspirators he did not know that only two floors separated him from the body of his brother. It was rumored that we had taken the body out into the bay and mutilated it and then sunk it, but such was not the case. When the old prison was demolished Booth's body was sent to his brother in Baltimore."

## MARY E. Surratt's GOOD NAME

### FIRE MAY HAVE DESTROYED PROOFS OF INNOCENCE.

#### One Was that a Government Stipulation Silenced Her and the Priest Who Shrivied Her at the Scaffold.

CHICAGO, March 23.—Fire has just destroyed the last shred of documentary evidence that, it was believed, would have removed the stain of conspiracy to assassinate Abraham Lincoln from the name of Mary E. Surratt.

This woman, who suffered death on the charge preferred against her, had for her counsel Col. John W. Clappitt of Highland Park, in whose possession was the evidence that he thinks would have restored her good name and shown that in the passion of the time an innocent person had been sacrificed.

For thirty years Col. Clappitt had been collecting data and evidence, and had it so complete, he believed, that none could doubt it. It was ready for publication, and then came the fire which destroyed his residence and all the evidence accumulated since that day, thirty years ago, when he strove to save the woman from the gallows. It was not until yesterday that Col. Clappitt spoke of this particular loss which he had suffered in the burning of his home.

"The world was beginning to believe that Mrs. Surratt was a martyr," he said, "and I had that which would have incontrovertibly proved it, but it is gone in flames.

"Did you know that only the other day Father Walter, the priest who administered extreme unction to Mrs. Surratt at the very foot of the scaffold, died in Washington? I saw him before his death. In order that you may know the value of the evidence that his declaration put in my hands, I must detail the scene at the execution.

"Mrs. Surratt was a devout Roman Catholic. I am a Protestant, but, in common with other Protestants, I know that truth falls from the lips of a person prepared for heaven, and who is about to die. This woman on the scaffold, shrived for eternity, turned to her spiritual adviser, and said: "'Holy Father, can I not tell these people before I die that I am innocent of the crime for which I have been condemned to death?"

"No, my child," Father Walter replied, "the world and all that is in it has now receded forever; it would do no good, and it might disturb the serenity of your last moments."

"Father Walter, before his death, revealed to me the secret of his refusal to let her speak.

"When I first sought him out in Washington to urge him to give me that which I needed to help clear her name, he told me, first of all, that the woman was absolutely innocent of the charge against her, and then he told me this astonishing story:

"He said it had been evident to him that the War Department, while bent on convicting, had doubts of the guilt of Mrs. Surratt. From the evidence given me by Father Walter, I learned that he had been sent for by the department the day before the execution, and had been told that he would not be allowed to see Mrs. Surratt on the day of her death unless he would pledge his faith and honor as a priest of God that after he had absolved her and she had received the sacrament he would prevent her from making any protestation of her innocence.

"In other words, as the price of being allowed to minister to a dying woman, Father Walter was forced by the War Department to consent to allow her to die without one word from her lips to the world as to her innocence. The fact that she did not declare her innocence when in the state of grace following absolution has been used as an argument in favor of her guilt. The truth is now known.

"Father Walter's story is gone in fire, but I have it in my memory, and now I let it go to the world."



# RARE RELIC OF LINCOLN TRAGEDY

Is Unearthed in Harrisburg  
Early This Week.

GEN. WM. H. H. McCALL  
ONCE THE POSSESSOR

Valued Gem Presented to Form-  
er Lewisburger By Mrs. Sur-  
ratt Just Before She  
Was Hanged.

A rare relic of the Lincoln tragedy, which was unearthed in Harrisburg this week, recalls to our memories one of Lewisburg's gallant Civil War soldiers and daring Indian fighters, in the person of General William H. H. McCall.

The relic is a beautifully carved fish of mother-of-pearl, and was the gift of Mrs. Surratt, the woman who was hanged for conspiring to murder Lincoln, to General McCall. The relic coming to light just at this time as the one hundredth anniversary of the birth of Lincoln approaches, is a peculiar coincidence, as unusual interest is being



General Wm. H. H. McCall

shown in this celebration by all American people.

General McCall was a brother of the late Capt. J. H. McCall and the events of whose life and the bravery and daring boldness in times of great peril, are the fond memories of all who had the pleasure of knowing this young soldier who was brevetted a brigadier general for gallantry, being the youngest general in the service.

Of the relic the Harrisburg *Star-Independent* of last Tuesday says:

"Until quite recently one of the rarest of Lincoln relics was owned by a Harrisburg lady, who bestowed it on a grand-niece in Philadelphia. It is a small but beautifully carved fish of mother-of-pearl and its original owner was Mrs. Surratt, who was hanged in Washington for conspiring to murder Lincoln. Mrs. Surratt wore the small fish as a religious token on her rosary and had it with her in the prison in Washington.

Two of the commanding officers in Hartranft's division of Pennsylvania volunteers were Colonel J. A. Matthews and Colonel William H. H. McCall, and they were part of the officers' guard that had charge of the prisoners who conspired to murder Lincoln.

Mrs. Surratt grew to be very fond of Colonel McCall and gave him the mother-of-pearl ornament from her rosary. It was afterwards the irony of fate that compelled young McCall in the discharge of his duty to place the noose over Mrs. Surratt's head.

When the excitement attendant on the hanging died over Colonel McCall came to Harrisburg with Colonel Matthews, both of whom had been brevetted brigadier generals, and gave the mother-of-pearl fish to Mrs. Matthews, at present Mrs. I. Elmer Cook, residing on North street.

Colonel Matthews had it mounted so that it could be worn as a neck ornament and it was used as such for years. Mrs. Cook some time ago gave the fish to a grand-niece named McClintick residing in Philadelphia, who now has it in her possession."

After the war General McCall drifted west where he joined Col. G. A. Forsyth and a company of scouts in subduing the Indian uprising which occurred about that time. *Harper's* magazine several years ago gave a thrilling description of an Indian fight that took place in 1868 on a little island in Delaware Creek, Colorado, between Chief Roman Nose and a thousand braves, and a small company of soldiers, in which McCall took part.

During this campaign against the Redskins McCall was wounded in the side by an Indian arrow, the effects from which he died several years later. He now lies buried in the cemetery at Prescott, Arizona, where he resided at the time of his death.



# Veteran Witnessed Hanging of Mrs. Surratt

Of the little company of men who stood about the scaffold in the death chamber of the city jail at Washington, D. C., on the morning of July 7, 1865, and watched the trap sprung which brought to an end the lives of members of the band of conspirators, who plotted the assassination of President Lincoln, and the attempted assassination of Secretary of State William H. Seward, the soldiers' home contains one. He is John C. Welliver. Not only was Mr. Welliver a spectator to the hanging, but he was the officer of the guard who watched over the prisoners just prior to and during their execution. It was only by chance that Welliver's story, which makes an important detail in the history of that period, became known.

Of the eight others who, with John Wilkes Booth, plotted the assassination of the president and his secretary of state, four were hanged from one scaffold before Welliver's eyes. Perhaps the most important of these was Mrs. Mary E. Surratt, the keeper of the boarding house which was the rendezvous of the plotters. The others were Lewis Payne Powell, who attempted to stab to death Secretary Seward as he lay injured in bed; David E. Herold, and George A. Atzerodt.

## Witnesses Parting With Daughter.

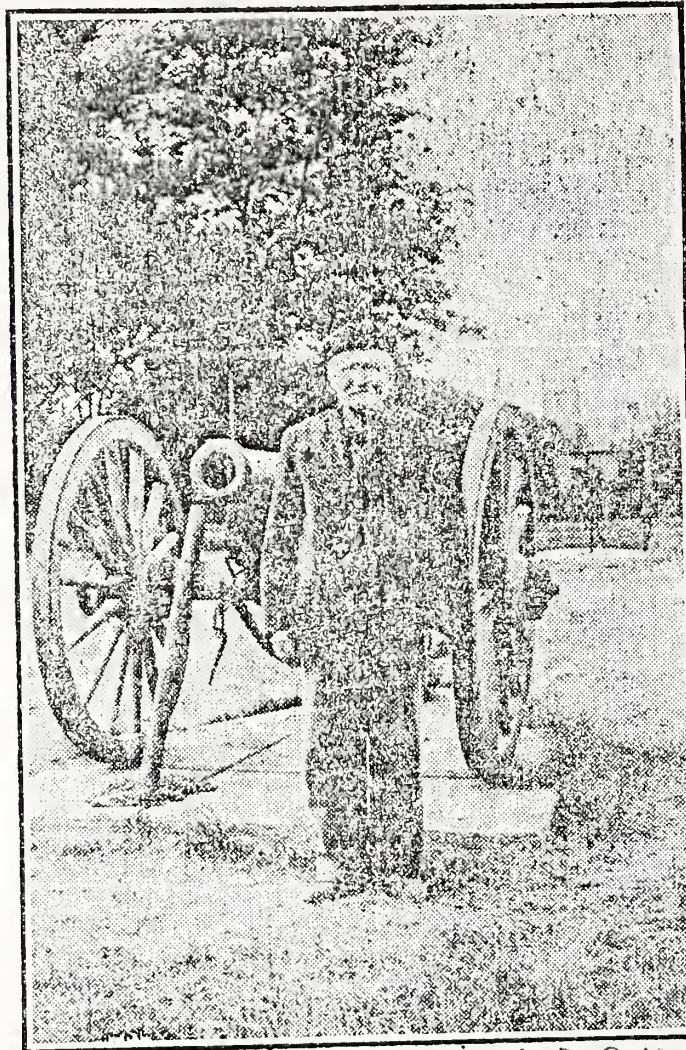
At the time of the execution Welliver was a second lieutenant in command of Company H, Second regiment of United States Veterans' Reserve Corps, encamped at Camp Stoneman, just across the Potomac from Washington. Ordered to the city jail of Washington on the morning of the execution for garrison duty Welliver not only saw the execution of Mrs. Surratt and the others, but was with the woman during her last hours and saw the parting with her daughter and the last religious rites that were administered during the closing hour of her life.

While he recalls thru the haze of more than half a century the incidents of the day Welliver, in his own words, told the following story to a Times-Republican reporter:

## Tells Story of Execution.

"I was lieutenant in command of the company at the prison where they were executed. I was ordered to take my company down there to do garrison duty. About an hour before they took them into the execution chamber I had to guard Mrs. Surratt while her daughter Annie, a girl about 18 then, took leave of her mother. It was the most affecting scene I ever saw. My orders were to watch Annie closely to see that she didn't pass anything to her mother. It was feared that Mrs. Surratt might attempt suicide. There were three men hung at the same time from the same scaffold.

Mrs. Surratt was a Catholic. The priest came just after Annie went out to perform the duty of the church. Mrs. Surratt was very, very calm. She was not a particle excited. She seemed willing and ready to meet death. After the priest had finished she was taken into the death chamber and was seated on the platform erected for the hanging. Black caps were slipped over



*Marshalltown Times-Republican, Oct. 9-1910*  
LIEUT. JOHN C. WELLIVER.

Probably Last Surviving Witness of Quadruple Execution of Lincoln Conspirators in 1865.

their heads and a rope was slipped about the neck of each. The last words were said by the priest.

"The captain, who had charge of the execution, had a sergeant stationed across the room and a rope stretched from the scaffold across to where the sergeant stood. When the time arrived for the execution the captain took out his handkerchief and wiped his mouth with it. That was the signal. As he did so the sergeant cut the rope that sprung the trap with a hatchet. All four were soon dead."

Welliver does not recall the exact hour, but he thinks it was between 10 and 11 o'clock in the morning. In addition to his company of ninety-six men there were a number of army officers and others who witnessed the execution. His recollection of Mrs. Surratt is that she was a tall, fine appearing, shapely and good looking woman. Served in Illinois Regiment.

Welliver is a Pennsylvania man, altho he has spent most of his life in Illinois and Iowa. He was living at Aledo, Ill., when the war broke out, and enlisted at Monmouth, in Company I, Seventeenth Illinois infantry on May 15, 1861. The regiment was recruited

in Peoria. After three years of service he was discharged, but in less than a year he had re-enlisted in the veterans' reserve corps in which he was serving when Lincoln was assassinated. He left the service the second time on March 9, 1866, almost a year after Lee surrendered.

## Former LeMars Business Man.

Soon after the war was over Welliver came to Iowa. He lived at LeMars from 1870 until Feb. 27, 1905, when he entered the home. During his residence there he was in the real estate business and claims the distinction of having sold more land in Plymouth county than any other man. For a number of years he was agent for the Iowa Railroad Land Company, which handled the land grant of the Iowa Falls and Sioux City railroad, later absorbed and made a part of the Iowa Central.

Mr. Welliver is a widower. He has a son, Scott Welliver, living in Sioux City, and a daughter, Mrs. William Everett, who lives in Ireton. Three other daughters live outside of the state.

Mr. Welliver is in very good health. He is of a quiet, retiring disposition, and seldom leaves the home grounds.



# MRS. SURRETT HANGED 48 YEARS AGO FOR MURDER

*August 3, 1913*  
Story of Assassination of  
Lincoln Recalled by Anni-  
versary of Death of 4  
Conspirators

In a far off corner in Mount Olivet cemetery there is a grave near the roadway that is a plain mound of green like the numberless others around it. And yet one glance at the name on the simple headstone is sufficient to cause the passer-by to stop a moment in silent contemplation. "Mrs. Surratt" is the single inscription on this granite slab, and it marks the final resting place of the woman whose tragic death has for 48 years been the subject of public and private debate.

The life of Mrs. Surratt before her connection with the Lincoln conspirators contained no element of romance or sensation. There was nothing unusual in her youth or middle age. She was just an ordinary woman absorbed in her various homely duties and devoted to the interests that husband and children require. She was born in Washington in 1820, and as a child was quiet in taste and manners. Her parents thought she might possibly follow a religious life, and at an early age they sent her to Alexandria, where her education was obtained in a seminary.

## MARRIED WHEN YOUNG

When rather a young girl she married John Surratt, a prosperous farmer, and the two began their wedded life on a farm at Surrattsville, about 10 miles below Washington.

After the death of her husband she took charge of his work, in which she was assisted by her eldest son, John. It was through this boy that Booth came to the Surratt home and began the friendship which proved fatal to all the members of the household. About that time Mrs. Surratt had rented her farm and taken a large rooming house in Washington. While put one evening with two of his mother's boarders John was introduced to Booth. The youth seemed fascinated by the superior will and intellect of the actor and their acquaintance ripened into friendly intimacy as the days went by. To Payne, Herold and Atzerodt also Booth extended his influence and these simple youths, like young Surratt, easily attracted by the talented leader, were soon drawn into the conspiracy. That John and his associates were directly concerned with the plot to kill the president there is little or no doubt, but the implication of his mother is a question which has and always will be a matter of conjecture.

## JOHN SURRETT ESCAPES

In the excitement that directly followed the assassination the prisons rapidly were filled with suspects from every quarter and then the house of Mrs. Surratt was seized and the woman and her daughter taken into custody. All the others who were followers of Booth were soon apprehended, except John, the son of Mrs. Surratt.

His whereabouts completely baffled the detective force. They traced him to Canada, but there all hope of finding him ended. Those in charge probably thought that by holding and trying the mother for murder the son might give himself up to shield her. But the trial went on, and even after the sentence was passed and carried out no trace of John was found, says the Washington Star.

At the decision of President Johnson, those held as accomplices of Booth were to be tried by a military commission, which consisted of nine members of the army. These officers, of whom General Lew Wallace was one, met just 26 days after Lincoln's death in a little room on the third floor of the old penitentiary building. When the prisoners were led into the courtroom they were bound with chains and heavily guarded. Mrs. Surratt, the only woman prisoner, was assigned to a place slightly removed from the others. But her sad position or the fact that she was a woman superior in many ways to the others tried with her did not obtain for her any extra attention or consideration. In her case the testimony was largely toward her simple life and loyal spirit. But the words of Weichman, a fellow student of John Surratt and a boarder in their home, and those of Lloyd, a tavern keeper near Surrattsville, were sufficient to overshadow all others, and it was due mostly to their testimony that Mrs. Surratt was convicted.

## DEATH PENALTY VOTED

The commission voted death as a punishment for Mrs. Surratt, Payne, Herold and Atzerodt, and banishment for the remaining four.

The unfortunate woman received the news bravely, although she clung to a last hope that mercy might be shown her. As the day of her doom approached efforts were made to obtain some clemency for her, but, after reading the death warrant handed to him by Judge Holt, the president shattered all hopes by signing the fatal decree. That was Wednesday, July 5, and the execution took place Friday, two days later.

In the short time that remained Mrs. Surratt made every preparation to meet her end. She had always been a devout Catholic, and Fathers Wiget and Walter were with her constantly, sustaining and encouraging her. A scaffold had been erected in the arsenal grounds and the four condemned were to die at the same time. Mrs. Surratt came first, walking between two guards and followed by her religious consolers. She was dressed in a simple gown of black and seemed oblivious of the terrible instrument or the sea of soldiers stationed near by.

## FOUR HANGED TOGETHER

Crowds of curious had gathered from all points within 100 miles of the city to witness the execution. But admission was denied to all, and although some remained outside the walls, no view could be obtained of what went on within. It was a hot afternoon and the sun's rays beat fiercely. A soldier standing close to Mrs. Surratt held an umbrella over her to keep off the intense heat. The prisoners were seated while the death warrant was read. Then the signal was given, they took their places on the drops and in a few moments four bodies were lowered into newly made graves beneath the prison sod.

Mrs. Surratt's body now rests beneath the branches of a giant oak in one of the most beautiful spots in Mount Olivet. It was removed there about a year after her death and placed beside her own relations. The little piece of granite that stands at the head says only "Mrs. Surratt." There is no mention of her birth, nor the why or when of her death. Nothing but the name alone arrests the attention of those who pass the roadway.

# WOMAN HANGED FOR LINCOLN'S DEATH WAS NOT GUILTY

Benjamin Pitman, Stenographer at Trial Says, Spies Lied About Mary Surratt.

Cincinnati, Feb. 13.—Almost fifty years after the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, the pen of Benjamin Pitman, pioneer of stenography, who was official stenographer at the trial of the conspirators, has revealed facts supporting his belief that Mrs. Mary Surratt, the woman hanged with three other conspirators, was innocent of the crime for which she was executed. The statement was written by Pitman just before his death here a year ago, and appears in the March issue of a Cincinnati magazine. A portion of Pitman's statement is:

"That Mrs. Surratt, who was hanged with three male conspirators concerned in a plot to assassinate President Lincoln and other government officials, was entirely innocent of any prior knowledge of or participation in those crimes is, to my mind, beyond question. My conviction is based on the following facts:

"That as official recorder of the trial, as having heard every word of the testimony; as compiler of the published volume 'Lincoln Assassination Trial' more than all, as having previous to the trial written down from the lips of the principal witnesses their stories of what they knew or about which, in their employment as spies, they lied, I have had the best opportunity of forming a true opinion as to the guilt or innocence of Mrs. Surratt."



**Hanged for Part in Lincoln Murder.**

Mrs. H. W. G., Chillicothe, Mo.: Mrs. Mary E. Surratt, who was hanged for alleged complicity in the murder of President Lincoln, was a native of Prince George County, Maryland, and it was at her house at Surrattsville that travelers for years stopped for meals as they journeyed from Southern Maryland to Washington. At this house John Wilkes Booth was a frequent visitor, and he stopped there a few days before the assassination of Lincoln, when on his way to Southern Maryland mapping out a route for his escape to Virginia.

Lincoln was shot by Booth on April 14, 1865. The other conspirators, with the exception of John H. Surratt, a son of Mrs. Surratt, were tried by a military commission in May and June. Mrs. Surratt was hanged July 7, 1865.

The alleged part of John H. Surratt was to have been the killing of Gen. U. S. Grant, but he lost his nerve and fled from the United States prior to the night on which the President was shot. He went successively to Canada, England and France, and then to Italy, where he joined the Pope's army and remained a year. While there he was arrested, but he escaped and fled to Naples. He sailed from there to Egypt, where he was recaptured. He was tried before a civil court. The jury disagreed and Surratt was released. He was the last survivor of the corps of alleged conspirators tried for implication in the assassination plot. He died April 21, 1916, in Baltimore. *K.C. L. Times 2-16-21*

\* \* \*  
Robert Cheney, of Wellsburg, W. Va., with one other man, is charged with having murdered a third man. At the trial it developed that Cheney is a nephew of Mrs. Mary Surratt, one of the conspirators hung for participation in the assassination of President Lincoln. The mother of Cheney was a sister of Mrs. Surratt.  
*Oct 26 - 1921*

**NO BIDDERS ON HOME  
OF PLOT AGAINST LINCOLN.**

Washington, March 24—A forlorn looking, dark, gray, old house was placed on the auction block here yesterday but not sold. It was the home of Mrs. Mary Surratt, who was executed as one of the Lincoln conspirators and it was in the little front parlor of the once pretentious residence that the conspirators met and planned the death of the martyred president.  
*1922*

## **Death Of Maine Civil War Veteran, 1721 Escort For Mrs. Surratt During Trial**

(Special to The Press Herald.)

Nashua, N. H., Nov. 29.—Albert Shepherd, a Civil war veteran from Maine, who acted as escort for Mrs. Mary Surratt when she was conducted from the jail to the court house to be hanged as an accomplice in the Lincoln assassination, died this morning at the home of his daughter, Mrs. Charles F. Nutter of this city. He was born in Jefferson, Me., February 17, 1842, and enlisted in C company, 4th Regiment, Maine Volunteer infantry, at the outbreak of the Civil war. He took part in the first battle of Bull Run, the battles of Williamsburg, Fair Oaks, Richmond, Fredericksburg, Chancellorville, Wilderness,

Gettysburg and several other of the important encounters of the war. At the battle of the Wilderness he was wounded, still carrying the bullet at the time of his death. He was honorably discharged from the service at Rockland, July 29, 1864, and was one of the soldiers privileged to hear the last public address of the martyred President.)

Mr. Shepherd was a member of the Austin Goodwin post, No. 63, Department of New Hampshire, G. A. R., and was also connected with the F. & A. M. He is survived by five children, Mrs. Charles F. Nutter of Nashua, N. H., Mrs. Annie E. Peters, Mrs. Reuben E. Snow, Frank B. and Dan Lee Shepherd, all of Portland.

## SELL SCENE OF PLOT OF LINCOLN'S DEATH

WASHINGTON, April 9.—A forlorn looking, dark gray old house was placed on the auction block here, but the auctioneer thought it was worth more than the bidders bid. It was the home of Mrs. Mary Surratt, who was executed as one of the Lincoln conspirators, and it was in the little front parlor of the once pretentious residence that the conspirators met and planned the death of the martyred President. *Chicago Herald 4/10/24*

106. (LINCOLN). Surrat, John. One of the "Conspirators, son of Mrs. Surrat, eventually found enlisted in the Pope's Swiss Guard. Holograph Manuscript Signed, 8vo, 4 pages, "Paddy's Ode to the Prince", a curious poem composed upon the

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Prince of Wales' visit to America, mentioning many people that then took a prominent part in the receptions. A RARE AUTOGRAPH. Mentioned in the ABOVE LETTER of Weichman, and part of the evidence against the "Conspirators". LIKE-  
LY UNIQUE SPECIMEN. 17.50.



# The Fate of the Lincoln

## Conspirators

The Story of the Pursuit, Capture,  
Trial and Execution of Those Who  
Plotted the President's Death

By H. O. BISHOP



Home of Mrs. Surratt, Where the Plotters  
Made Their Plans

### FINALLY REACHES SEWARD

After taking a few steps down the stairs Payne suddenly wheeled about and with a terrific blow with his revolver knocked the son down, fracturing his skull. Hearing the noise in the hall, Sergeant George F. Robinson, who was nursing Mr. Seward, rushed out to ascertain what was going on. The moment the door opened, Payne struck him on the forehead with his knife, knocking him aside, and rushed past him to Seward's bedside where he struck the afflicted man three times in the neck with his dagger. One blow cut the Secretary's cheek from face to neck; the other two blows, fortunately, were deflected by the steel framework the doctors had placed on the jaw to hold the broken bones together during the process of knitting. This is doubtless all that prevented the murder of Seward. Robinson nervily grabbed Payne and tried to pull him away from the bed of the helpless man. He was joined in this effort by Augustus H. Seward, another son. They grappled and finally got him to the door, when he broke from their grip, ran downstairs and out the front door. He leaped upon his horse and galloped away.

It was undoubtedly Payne's intention to shoot Seward. He had a loaded revolver in his hand when he entered the room. It was subsequently learned that the pin of the revolver was so injured by the striking of Frederick Seward, as to make it impossible to raise the hammer.

George A. Atzerodt, who was assigned to

murder Vice President Johnson, evidently did not have the courage to perform the deed. He secured a room at the Kirkwood House on April 14. This room was just above the one occupied by the Vice President. In passing from his room to the hotel office it would be necessary for Atzerodt to pass Johnson's door. In a coat which was left hanging on the wall was found a map of Virginia and a bankbook in the name of J. Wilkes Booth, showing a credit of \$455 with a bank at Montreal, Canada. Beneath the pillow was found a loaded revolver.

### GENERAL GRANT'S ESCAPE

General Grant, who was to have attended Ford's Theatre on the night Lincoln was shot, doubtless avoided death by changing his plans and leaving for Burlington, N. J., to visit his family, who were stopping there.

The whole nation was incensed at these diabolical crimes. There was but one thought in the minds of all loyal Americans—to capture, quickly, place on trial, and punish every guilty person.

The government immediately offered a reward of \$100,000, and soldiers and others at once set out to capture the culprits.

The bother of a trial and execution in the case of Booth, the arch-conspirator, was made unnecessary by reason of his being shot by a soldier when he refused to surrender. After escaping from Ford's theatre, on the night of the murder, Booth made his way on horseback across the river into Maryland, thence through the southern part of that state, and across the Potomac river to the Garrett farm in Virginia, not far from the little town of Bowling Green. He was accompanied on this trip by David E. Herold, one of the conspirators.

At two o'clock on the morning of April 26th—twelve days after Lincoln's assassination—a group of horsemen, in charge of Lieutenant-Colonel Everton J. Conger, of New York, and Lieutenant L. B. Baker, of New York, swiftly riding through the darkness, arrived at the Garret farm and immediately surrounded the house, barn and outbuildings. These officers had good reason

**N**OW he belongs to the ages." This utterance was made by Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton, on the morning of April 15, 1865, a few moments after the soul of Abraham Lincoln had taken its flight. Stanton had sat by the bedside of his dying chief all through the long night, anxiously and broken-heartedly awaiting the result of the cruel wound inflicted by the bullet of the miserable assassin, John Wilkes Booth.

Truer philosophy was never spoken by any man. With the passing of the years the life and accomplishments of Lincoln become more and more familiar, and more highly estimated and appreciated by the people of America.

The murder of Lincoln was but a part of the dastardly deeds planned by Booth and his gang. It was their intention not only to kill Lincoln, but also Vice President Andrew Johnson, Secretary of State William H. Seward, and General U. S. Grant, the head of the army. By murdering these men they hoped to completely overthrow the government.

Lewis Payne, close pal of Booth, was selected to murder Secretary Seward, who was confined to his bed with a broken arm and fractured jaw as a result of being thrown from his carriage a few days before.

At 10 p. m., on the night of Lincoln's assassination, Payne (his real name was Lewis Thornton Powell) rang the door bell of the Seward home, located within the shadow of the White House. When the doorkeeper opened the door he stepped inside, displaying a small package in one hand, saying it was medicine for Mr. Seward, sent by Dr. Verdi, and that he was directed to deliver it in person and tell Mr. Seward how it should be taken. The doorkeeper said he had strict orders to admit no one, but Payne was so persistent and determined in his talk that he finally weakened, allowing Payne to ascend the stairs. At the top he met Frederick Seward, a son of the Secretary, to whom he repeated his story. He was told that Secretary Seward was asleep and could not be disturbed, and that he would take the medicine and attend to it later. Payne continued arguing, whereupon the young man said: "I am running things here; I am Mr. Seward's son; if you cannot leave your message with me, you cannot leave it at all."



what I thought was best."

He was shot at a quarter past three, and died just as the sun was rising.

Sergeant Corbett gave this description of the shooting: "When the fire approached Booth, he stepped toward the door, and I supposed he was going to fight his way out. My mind was on his movements all the time, and I was afraid he would shoot someone, as he said he could have shot a number of soldiers. I became convinced that it was time to shoot, and I took steady aim on my arm with my revolver and, through a large crack in the barn, shot him. When he was brought out, I found that the wound was made in the neck, back of the ear, and came out a little higher up on the other side of the head."

The body of Booth and the prisoner Herold were brought to Washington by boat.

### BOOTH SURROUNDED

Surrounding the barn with soldiers, Baker called to the men inside that he was going to send Garrett's son in the barn and unless they surrendered their arms to him the barn would be set on fire. When Garrett, wearing a Confederate uniform, tried to persuade Booth to give up the arms he answered: "— you! Get out of here; you have betrayed me." Garrett lost no time in getting out.

Then ensued this conversation between Baker and Booth: "You must surrender inside there; there is no chance to escape. I

will give you five minutes to make up your mind."

"Who are you and what do you want with us?"

"We want you to deliver your arms and surrender."

"But who are you?"

"That makes no difference; we know who you are and we want you. We have 50 armed men here and you can't escape."

"This is a hard case, I swear. Perhaps I am being taken by my own friends; give me more time."

"Well, we've waited long enough. Surrender your arms and come out, or we will fire the barn."

"I am a cripple. Withdraw your forces 100 yards from the door and I will come out. Give me a chance for my life, for I will never be taken alive."

"We did not come here to fight, but to capture you, and if you do not come out I will fire the barn."

Then a conversation could be heard in the barn between Booth and Herold. "You're a — coward, and want to leave me in my distress," said Booth, "but, go, go! I don't want you to stay; I won't have you stay!"

After assuring Baker that he had no firearms, that they were in the possession of Booth, Herold was told to extend his arms out of the barn when he was handcuffed and made a prisoner.

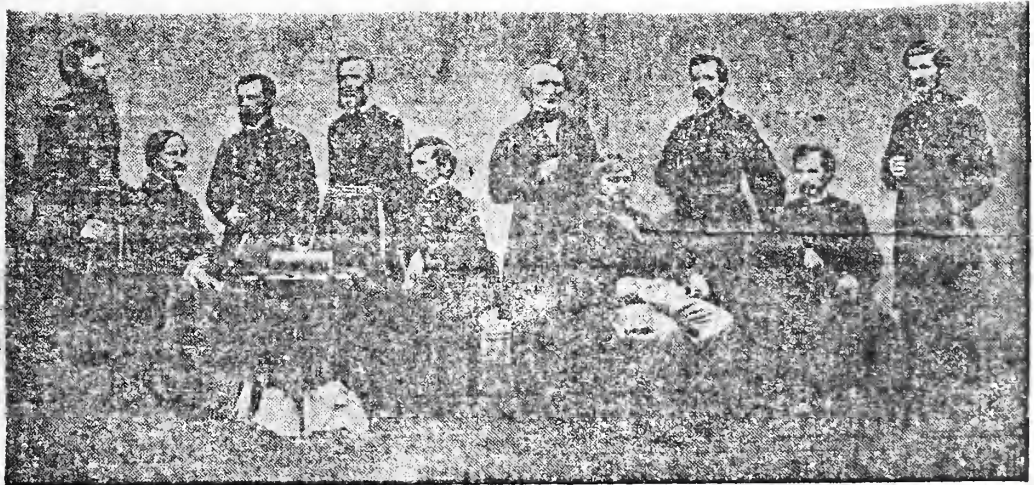
Booth now renewed the conversation. "Draw off your men," he said, "and I will fight them singly. I could have already killed half a dozen of your men. Give a lame man a show."

He had talked too long. As he finished his last words, the hay was set on fire through a crack. In a few moments the interior was ablaze with light, and Booth could plainly be seen standing in the center with one arm over his crutch, assisting the other one in holding his carbine. The flames prevented him from seeing those standing in the darkness outside. As the flames increased, he stepped nearer the door, with gun cocked, ready to fire. But he never got the opportunity to shoot. At this tense moment a pistol shot was heard. Booth sank to the floor of the barn. Soldiers rushed in and dragged him out. To all appearances he was dead, but after water had been dashed in his face and poured down his throat he partially revived. Seeing that he was trying to say something an officer leaned close to him and heard him say: "Tell my mother I died for my country, and did

### BASELESS STORIES

From that time to this stories have been circulated to the effect that Booth was not killed, but escaped, and for years lived in Texas and Oklahoma, eventually dying a natural death. There is not the least foundation for such stories. The body was definitely identified as that of Booth by a number of people who knew him well, and who were designated for that purpose by Gideon Welles, Secretary of the Navy. As a further means of positively identifying the body, Dr. J. F. May, a physician of Washington, who had two years before removed a tumor from Booth's neck, located the scar. Attention was also called to his initials on his arm in India ink.

Those apprehended as conspirators or tools of Booth, were: Mrs. Mary E. Surratt, Atzerodt, Herold, Payne, Dr. Samuel A. Mudd, Samuel Arnold, Edward Spangler,



The Military Trial Board: Left to Right, Thomas M. Harris, David Hunter, August V. Kautz, James A. Elkin, Lew Wallace, John A. Bingham, Joseph Holt, Robert S. Foster, H. L. Burnett, C. R. Clendenin



# REMODEL HOUSE OF LINCOLN SLAYERS

SIXTY years soon will have passed since the assassination of President Lincoln. Through that long period the hand of time has touched lightly the hideous room in Washington, which was visited by John Wilkes Booth on the afternoon of the great national tragedy. While not strictly a relic of the Lincoln conspirators, the house was familiar to most of them. Consequently it bears an intimate relation to the plot to abduct the great war President, which later developed into his assassination.

For six decades after that fateful Good Friday night of April 14, 1865, when the assassin's shot was fired in a box in the old Ford Theatre, dealing death to the "man of the ages," the Surrat house remained unchanged. All around it the capital had changed, but the three-story brick in which Mrs. Mary E. Surrat opened a boarding house in the closing year of the Civil War stayed as it was. It had never been remodelled. It was well preserved. It had the flavor of the Civil War period about it. It was gazed at by thousands of tourists to Washington and was shunned by the superstitious. Since the execution of Mrs. Surrat the place has been called haunted.

Lately the march of progress has taken heavy toll of historic houses in Washington. The Surrat house seemed secure until several weeks ago, when workmen began to remodel it for commercial use. The house is not to be torn down. Its brickwork will be retained, but the entire appearance of the place will be changed. The ground floor will become a shop, the second and third floors will be apartments.

The present number of the place is 604 H Street, Northwest. The doorplate bears the number of 541 in Mrs. Surrat's time. Mrs. Surrat was reared in Prince George County, Maryland, where she was considered a belle. She married John H. Surrat in 1853, and they settled first on a farm near Washington, then opened a tavern at Surrattville, in that county. They had three children, a daughter and two sons. One of the sons entered the Confederate service and the other, John H. Surrat, became a companion of Booth, and was accused, with his mother, of having a part in the conspiracy against Lincoln.

After becoming a widow Mrs. Sur-

rat moved to Washington in the Autumn of 1864 and opened her boarding house. She was then 45 years of age. On Dec. 23, 1864, her son John was introduced to John Wilkes Booth, the actor, by Dr. Samuel A. Mudd, who was to be sentenced to life at Dry Tortugas after the trial of the Lincoln conspirators, and, within four years, to receive a pardon from President Andrew Johnson.

After the meeting of Booth and John H. Surrat some of those tried for conspiracy, including Booth, were frequent visitors at the Surrat house.

Mrs. Surrat was one of the very few women. If not the only woman, subjected to capital punishment in Washington. She was hanged with three men, all Lincoln conspirators, in the grounds of the old Washington Arsenal on July 7, 1865. Since that day no woman has ever been executed in Washington. Strong efforts were made to save Mrs. Surrat from the gallows. Many have thought that the evidence did not clearly establish that she was aware that Booth contemplated killing Lincoln and that she was a victim of injustice. The actual facts with respect to the relationship of Mrs. Surrat to the conspiracy will probably never be ascertained beyond the testimony given in the military trial and will probably remain a subject of controversy.

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"I know the character of the American people," exclaimed District Attorney Pierpont at the trial. "I know the imagination revolts at the execution of one of the tender sex. But when a woman opens her house to murderers and conspirators, infuses the poison of her own crime into their hearts and urges them on to the crime of murder and treason, I say boldly, as an American officer, that public safety, public duty requires that an example be made of her conduct."

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Welchmann, testifying as to his first meeting with Booth, several months before the assassination, said he was standing with John H. Surrat in front of the Surrat house and that Surrat he went down Seventh Street. They were accosted by Dr. Mudd, who had come to Washington from Bryantown, Md., accompanied by a stranger whom he introduced as John Wilkes Booth. Booth invited them to his room at the old National Hotel. The Government considered this evidence important as the second place where Booth stopped on the night of his flight from Washington following April 13.

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The visits of Atzerodt and other conspirators to the Surrat house were narrated by Welchmann in his testimony. He told of a visit to the house, one evening in February preceding the tragedy, of a veiled woman who was driven to the house by John H. Surrat. The woman wore a "mask" and he was told she was a dispatch bearer and a blockade runner. Another visitor to the Surrat house was "Spencer Howell," as he was described by Welchmann. Howell remained there two days after running the blockade, and before leaving taught the War Department clerk a cipher which later proved to be the same as one used both by Booth and the Confederacy, although Welchmann did not know this at the time.

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Secretary of State Seward on the night Lincoln was shot.

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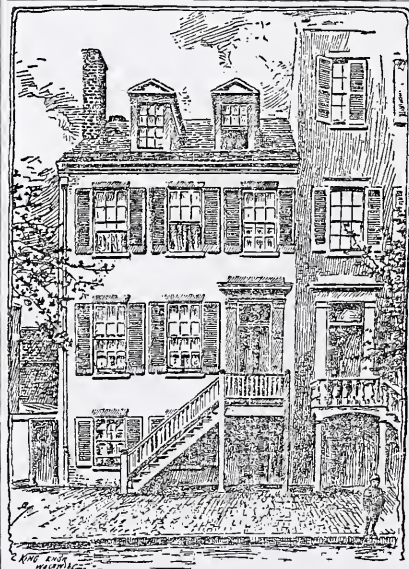
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She was ordered to come to the door. When she responded she was placed under arrest and taken to General Ager's headquarters. A while later a Secret Service agent from the War Department seized her papers and arrested the inmates of the house. While in the house the officers heard a ring at the door. Upon opening it they beheld Lewis Payne, who had called with a pick, pretending to be a workman. War Department agents had been searching for him for forty-eight hours. They placed him under arrest. He was tried, convicted and hanged with Mrs. Surrat.

John H. Surrat was not tried with his mother. He had fled from Washington and could not be found. It developed that he had gone to Montreal, then sailed for Liverpool and enlisted in the Fugate Zouave. He was arrested, escaped from his guardians, was traced to Malta and then to Egypt, and there re-arrested. An American corvette brought him to Washington, where he was tried in the Summer of 1867. He endeavored to prove an alibi and the jury disagreed. He was re-arrested and discharged by the court.



Mrs. Surrat's House at Washington.



SATURDAY, FEB. 14, 1925

## LAST OF LINCOLN DEATH LANDMARKS IS DELICATESSEN

WASHINGTON, Feb. 13.—After nearly 60 years of unmolested existence the old Mary E. Surrat house, one remaining landmark associated with the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, has given way to the inroads of commerce.

For years, since the night of April 14, 1865, the little three-story brick structure on H street has been known to sightseers as the place wherein the plot, that resulted in the tragic death of the war-time President was hatched. Children have shunned it as haunted. From its two windows, which protruded from its gable roof like spectral eyes, they believed the ghost of Mrs. Surrat stared down upon the city in which she was hanged for the conspiracy against Lincoln.

### NEVER REMODELED

The house had never been remodeled. The same wooden staircase which angled across the street front to the doorway on the main floor, the stairway that John Wilkes Booth tramped to join the meetings where the plot was planned, still remained. Recently, however, the carpenters arrived and now it has all been changed. The stairs have been torn down, a plate-glass store window has been built in the front, the bricks have been painted white and the interior made modern. From now until its aged walls crumble or succeeding tenants change the plans, the Surrat house will serve as a delicatessen store with the top floors rented as apartments.

### LAST TO SUFFER

Originally there were three buildings connected with the killing of Lincoln. The Surrat home was the last to suffer the ravages of time. The old Ford theater, in which the President was shot, still bears a slight resemblance to a playhouse from the outside, but its interior has been remodeled to serve as a warehouse for the war department.

Across the street from the Ford theater, surrounded by taller buildings of recent construction is the little red brick house where the fatally wounded Lincoln was carried and where he died at 7:22 o'clock the next morning. Large signs on the front announce that "This is the house in which Abraham Lincoln died."

Q.. What has become of the old Surratt house, in Washington?—  
M. B.

A. During 1925, the famous old Surratt house, which was on H street, was remodeled into a store and apartment house. It was in this house that the conspiracy to assassinate Lincoln was discussed by John Wilkes Booth and others. The structure had stood intact for nearly 60 years. It was here in the parlor on the second floor that some of the conspirators met and held conferences. John Wilkes Booth went to this house on the afternoon preceding the assassination. There he arranged for horses and guns to use in his flight. The house was the residence of Mrs. Mary Surratt. She conducted it in Civil war times as a boarding house for theatrical people, one of her patrons being John Wilkes Booth.

SIXTY years soon will have passed since the assassination of President Lincoln. Through that long period the hand of time has touched lightly the historic Surratt house in Washington, which was visited by John Wilkes Booth on the afternoon of the great national tragedy. While not strictly a rendezvous of the Lincoln conspirators, the house was familiar to most of them. Consequently it bears an intimate relation to the plot to abduct the great war President, which later developed into his assassination.

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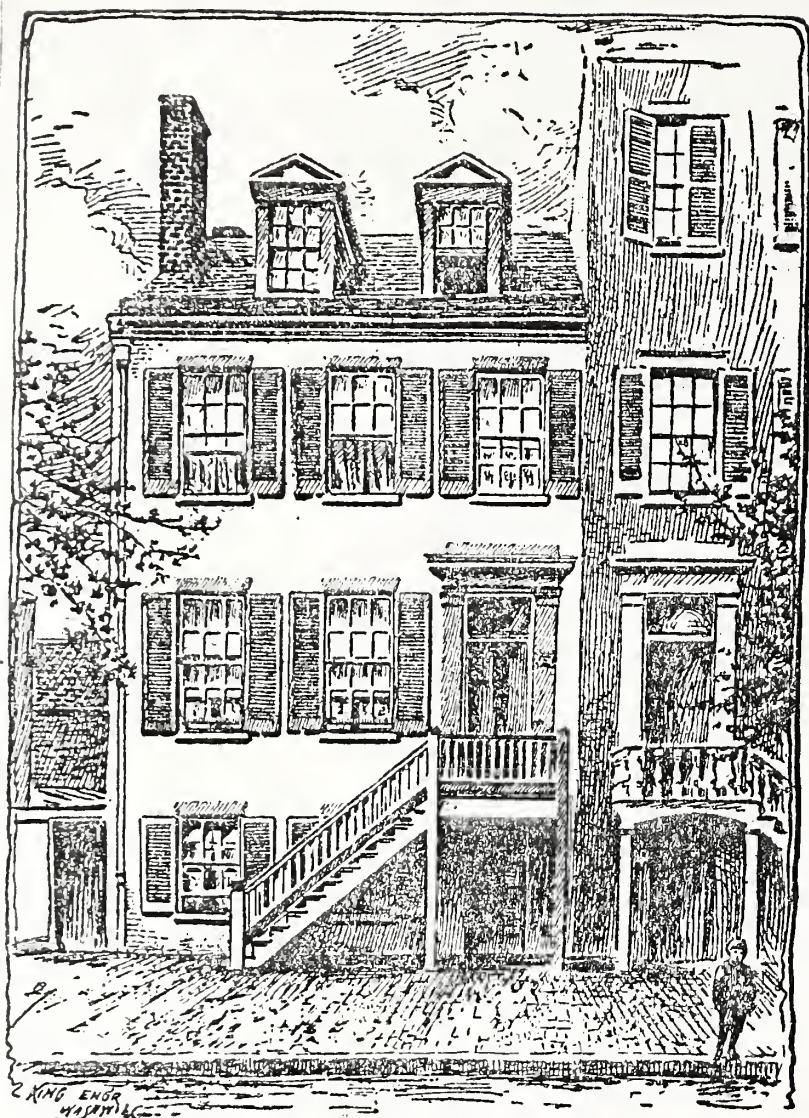
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Mrs. Surratt's House at Washington.



# LINCOLN PLOT FIGURE IN GHOST TALES

By Mary Jane Brumley.

A PLAIN gravestone out in nearby old Mount Olivet Cemetery marks the last resting place of one of the most debated women in American history. Mary E. Surratt's scant half-century of life brought her little renown, but death gave her a place in the pages of history. Hanged as one of the conspirators in the plot to assassinate President Lincoln, she has been variously branded as a villainess of the worst ilk and extolled as the personification of all the virtues.

Perhaps the H street lodging-house keeper was born under an ill-fated star—things never seemed right with her. And the death which gave Mary Surratt a sorry role in the annals of the future brought no rest for her maligned memory. Superstitious purchasers of the H street property followed one another in swift succession, vowing that they would not live in a house where the lady walked the halls at midnight, clad in robes of death.

Then the politicians began to see things, too, and the fat was in the fire. "There was no imagination," says an American historian, "about the ghost that stalked after President Andrew Johnson. The dead woman became, all too soon, a living force in the worst shambles that ever beset American politics, the quarrel between Johnson and the radicals." This is the end of the story, though, and we are concerned with the beginning.

We know now that John Wilkes Booth's first plan was to kidnap, rather than to kill, President Lincoln. Obviously, this was no one-man job—he must have assistance. So he began to assemble the supporting cast for his greatest role.

LACK of space forbids our telling of the various recruits. In due time, however, he added one John H. Surratt, \$50 a month clerk for the Adams Express Co. and occasional blockade runner for the Confederacy. Surratt himself proved of no real use to the plot, but was the unwitting cause of his mother's death, for he introduced her to the dashing Booth. Now Mrs. Surratt, described as "a pious, hard-faced widow of 45," could scarcely have furnished a romantic interest for the actor, but the family home did give him the necessary rendezvous for consultations with co-workers.

Some authorities think that Mrs. Surratt was fascinated by Booth, who was some 20 years her junior. Small wonder if she was, for life had been hard on Mary Jenkins Surratt. Raised near Waterloo, on Calvert's manor, Prince Georges County, Md., the young woman had shown a desire for self-improvement, and so was sent to a female seminary in Alexandria. Returning home, she became a belle, and, says a newspaper of that day, "quite as noted for her strong will,

## Mrs. Surratt, Associate of Booth, Buried in Old Mount Olivet Cemetery, After Paying Supreme Price.



MRS. MARY E. SURRATT,  
Hanged July 7, 1865, as one of the conspirators in the plot to assassinate President Lincoln. From a photograph in the Lincoln Museum.

seldom failing in anything she undertook."

About 1835 she married John H. Surratt, sr., and the future must have looked very bright when they went to live at Condon's Mill, an estate inherited from the husband's uncle. But Negro slaves, seemingly infuriated by some cruelty of their mistress, burned the house. John Surratt then worked for some time as a contractor on the Alexandria Railroad, but eventually returned to Prince Georges County and bought a tavern which he called "Surratt's," about 13 miles southeast of Washington.

"The drift was all downhill," says a commentator. Money was scarce. John Surratt got a tiny postmastership but was so uneducated that all the duties of the office devolved upon his wife. He died in 1863, leaving the poor woman with three children—Annie, away at convent school; John and

Isaac, who had joined the Confederate Army. Things became steadily worse, so she leased the tavern and moved into Washington. Annie came home from school and they opened a lodging house at 541—now 604—H street N.W. This, then, was the household into which son John brought John Wilkes Booth.

THE young lady boarders must have thought him quite an accession, for he was gallant and handsome and entertaining and quick to turn music pages while they played the piano. And so the plot moved steadily on until the surrender at Appomattox. That changed things a bit. Plainly, there was no point in kidnapping the President for the prisoners of war, which Booth thought to ransom in exchange for his great captive, would now be released, anyway. The rest of the story is history. Lincoln died in the house of

a Swedish tailor on Tenth street and a hue and cry went out for the heads of the guilty.

The Surratt family fell under suspicion and both mother and daughter were arrested. A \$25,000 reward was offered for John as an accomplice, but he foiled the authorities for several years and finally escaped the noose because the jury could not agree. Sister Alice was dismissed after questioning when the conspirators were brought to trial early in May, 1865. No so fortunate their mother, and on July 5 she was sentenced, together with three men, "to be hanged by the neck until dead," sentence to be carried out "between the hours of 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. on July 7, 1865." Her companions in misery were David E. Herold, George A. Atzerodt and Lewis Powell.

Mrs. Surratt had not borne up well during the trial, although one newspaper account says that "one or the other of her blue eyes continually peeped from behind her palm leaf fan." When sentence was pronounced, she asked in terror for more time to prepare herself for eternity. Her attorneys, knowing full well that an extension might be impossible, advised the poor woman to use such time as remained to best advantage. Religious advisers were granted to her, as to all the prisoners, and two priests were at her side continuously. They accompanied her to the scaffold, when all hope was gone, and administered the sacrament just before the trap was sprung. So thoughtful were they that one priest carried an umbrella over her head as protection against the blazing July sun. Lewis Powell, not so tenderly used, snatched for himself the new straw hat of Lt. Col. McCall, one of the attending officers.

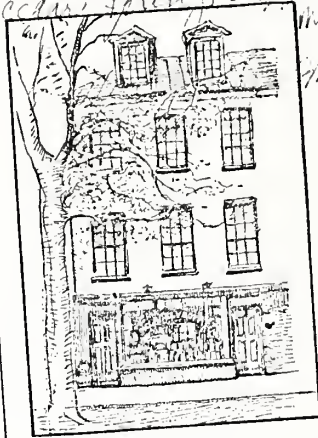
THE authorities were loath to hang a woman and waited until the last moment for a possible stay or reprieve. But at last they could delay no more and when, in answer to hangman Rath's "Her, too?", Gen. Hancock nodded the second time, the doors dropped with their awful burdens.

"But the 'widow-woman's' ghost was abroad in the land." When President Andrew Jackson swung back to the dead Lincoln's peaceful plans for reconciliation, his enemies had their fling. On the floor of the Johnson impeachment trial, they charged him with having "railroaded" Mrs. Surratt to the gallows and said that he had cruelly turned down the plea for mercy that five of her judges had signed. Johnson retorted that he had never seen such a paper. Judge Advocate Holt said that he lied. The trial became a regular witches' cauldron of charges and counter charges about the dead woman and her guilt or innocence. All this, of course, to add to Johnson's woes.

And so the record runs. The stone on the well-kept grave in old Mt. Olivet says merely "Mrs. Surratt" and gives no hint of the troubled career of her who lies beneath.

# Home of Conspirators National Capital Sight

At 604 H street, N. W., Washington, still stands the house where conspirators in the assassination of President Lincoln met. Mrs. Mary E. Surratt here conducted a boarding house. With three other plotters, she was hanged in the old Washington arsenal in July, 1865. The house was built



Surratt House.

long before the Civil war. The lower floor now sells apparatus to home brewers. The Ford theater, scene of the shooting of Lincoln, is not so far away. The latter is now used as an army recruiting station and storehouse for government records.

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# TELLS OF HELPING BOOTH TO ESCAPE

Ex-Slave, Unwitting Aide of  
Lincoln's Slayer, Lives in  
Chester County

(Illustrated on Picture Page)

Assisting the injured John Wilkes Booth off his jaded horse and onto a fresh one following his assassination of President Lincoln in the old Ford Theatre, Washington, is a clear-cut memory to Nathan Simms, an ex-slave, now living in Marshallton, Chester County, a village five miles above West Chester.

At the time the President was mortally wounded "Uncle Nate," as the 84-year-old Negro is affectionately known in Marshallton, was 18 years old and served as a stable boy at Mrs. Mary E. Surratt's place in Surrattsville, Md., thirteen miles southeast of the capital.

It was there that Booth and Davy Herold came, after the former had mortally wounded Lincoln on the night of April 14, 1865, to secure arms and a package brought there on the previous afternoon by Mrs. Surratt and her son, John.

## Knew Something Was Wrong

"I knew something was wrong that night when Booth and Herold rode into Surrattsville," Uncle Nathan said today in relating how he unwittingly aided the President's assassin on Booth's wild flight from the capital.

"Booth's leg was injured and Herold was all excited. But I didn't know until the following morning that Booth had killed the President and injured his leg when he jumped from the President's box to the stage.

"I helped Booth off his mount, a horse owned by Mrs. Surratt, and he and Herold went into the house, where they remained for some minutes.

"When they came out both were armed, although I had noticed no gun on Booth when he entered.

"I helped Booth onto a fresh horse, one of his own, and he and Herold rode away."

Although history records that Mrs. Surratt returned to Washington after her trip to Surrattsville on the afternoon preceding the assassination, Uncle Nathan declares that she was present when Booth and Herold came in that night and that she remarked excitedly:

"I'm glad the old rebel is dead."

"Every one seemed excited," Uncle Nathan declared, "so I knew something was up, but I didn't dare ask any questions. It never entered my mind that any one had harmed Lincoln.

"When the soldiers came in the morning I was taken to Washington and questioned and learned the truth. I was released after I told what I knew.

"Booth had been a frequent visitor

at Surrattsville for some months, he and young John being regular buddies, but in all that time I never overheard a word that would lead me to believe that they were plotting against the President."

When asked how he felt when he learned that Lincoln had been murdered Uncle Nathan replied:

"All of us colored folks felt very bad that Lincoln was killed. Those of us who were born slaves, as I was, knew how hard he had worked for our freedom and counted him our best friend.

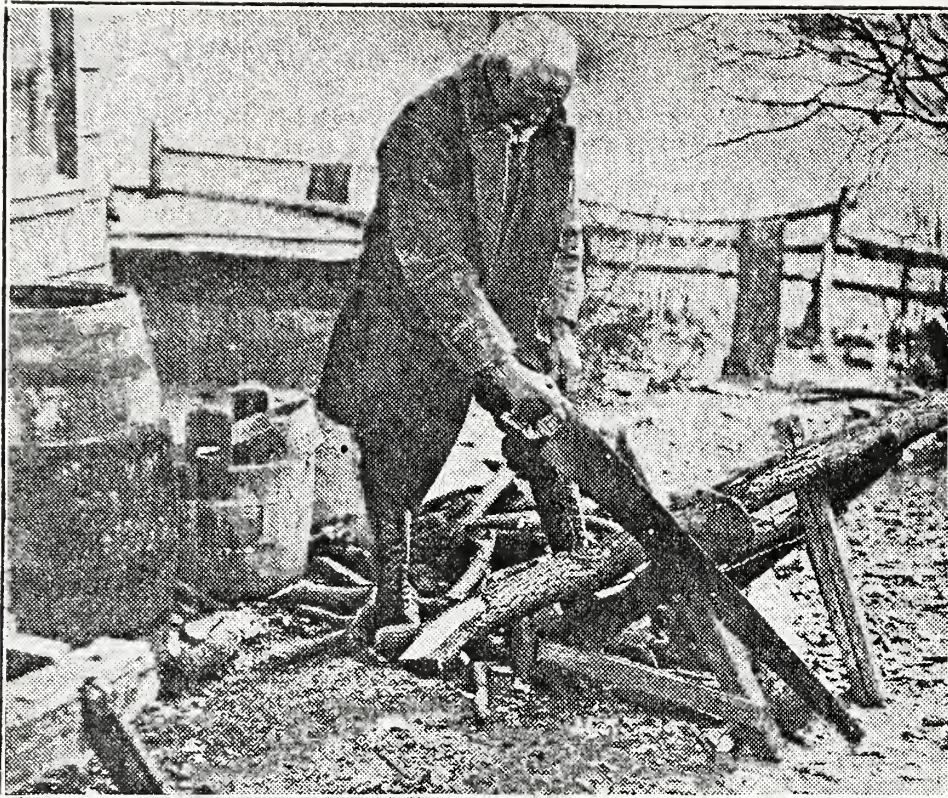
"After I returned to Surrattsville from being questioned in Washington, I remained there two months, but I never saw Mrs. Surratt again, nor Booth, Herold nor John. Of course I heard about the shooting of Booth in Garrett's tobacco house, on the road to Bowling Green, and the capture of Herold there."

## Worked His Way North

In the following July, when Uncle Nathan was working in Annapolis, Md., he heard of the execution of Mrs. Surratt, Herold, George A. Atzerodt and Lewis Payne for their part in the plot against Lincoln and the imprisonment of Dr. Samuel A. Mudd, who set Booth's leg during his flight after the assassination; Sam Arnold, Edward Spangler and Michael O'Laughlin.

Uncle Nate soon left Maryland to work his way North, and since he was 19 years of age he has lived in Marshallton.

Despite his advancing years Uncle Nate cuts corn in the fall of the year and does other jobs about the village as well as getting in his own wood and doing household chores.



Ledger Photo  
**LINCOLN'S SLAYER WAS AIDED** unwittingly by Nathan Simms, 84, of Marshallton, near West Chester, when the ex-slave was a stable boy at Surrattsville, Md., the place where John Wilkes Booth stopped for a horse after the President's assassination. Simms is shown sawing wood at his home

PHILADELPHIA LEDGER  
2-12-32



## Negro Who Held Horse For Booth Is Dead 1/5/6

COATESVILLE, Pa., Jan. 19 (A. P.).—Nathan Simms, Negro, more than 80 years old, who, local tradition has it, was a stable boy at the home of Mrs. John H. Surratt and held the horse on which John Wilkes Booth made his escape after assassinating Abraham Lincoln, died this week and was buried yesterday.

Simms's story to his friends was that after the assassination Booth rode to the Surratt home near Washington and changed horses. Simms held the horse on which Booth rode away again as it was being saddled, not knowing what Booth had done.

The old Negro lived at Marshallton, near here, for many years, doing odd jobs about farms. He was buried in potter's field of the Chester County Home for the Poor at Embreeville.

*Cleveland Plain Dealer 2/12/38*

# The Man Who Hanged Mrs. Mary E. Surratt

By HARLOWE R. HOYT

## Five Who Died

I knew the man who hanged Mrs. Mary E. Surratt, one of five conspirators to die as the outcome of the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. Not only Mrs. Surratt but Lewis Payne stood upon the trap when he released the prop that sent them to their death. On the other half of the double gallows David E. Harold and George A. Atzerodt were hanged. John Wilkes Booth, the assassin, had died from a bullet in the head when he was cornered at the end of his futile attempt to escape.

The man who hanged Mrs. Surratt was William Coxshall, a resident of Beaver Dam, Wis., where I was born. Kindly, taciturn, well known and respected in the little village, Coxshall gave up a thriving butcher business to become a cattle buyer in southern Wisconsin. Not until late in life did he confide his secret even to his immediate family. It was then that I heard the story from his own lips.

Coxshall enlisted in '61 as a boy of 22. Wounded at the siege of Petersburg, he was transferred to Company F of the Veteran Reserve Corps at Washington, where he served when Lincoln was killed on April 14, 1865. Soldiers of Michigan, Illinois and Indiana had been wounded at Petersburg in the premature explosion of a mine and these made up the company.

Booth killed Lincoln and fled, only to be overtaken and killed. Lewis Payne was arrested after attempting to murder Secretary of State William H. Seward. David E. Harold had been Booth's companion on his flight. George Atzerodt was an active conspirator told off to murder Vice President Andrew Johnson but lacking the courage. The conspirators met at the home of Mrs. Mary E. Surratt. After a long drawn out military trial these four were sentenced to be hanged.

Col. Christian Rath was appointed to supervise the execution. He died some years ago in Adrian, Mich. It devolved upon members of the "Invalid Corps" to work under him. A gallows was erected in the yard of the United States Arsenal in Washington. On July 6, 1865, the 200 men of the corps reported for their morning inspection.

## Volunteers Wanted

"I want four able bodied men to volunteer for special duty," Rath announced.

There were plenty of volunteers, for the humdrum existence of loafing day after day was appalling to the men and anything was better than idleness. Coxshall was chosen with several others. Not until they walked into the yard where the gallows were did they realize that they were to participate in an execution. They were set to work cleaning the yard of refuse that littered it. Then they were assigned to duty.

The four able bodied men were delegated to spring the traps. Four others were assigned the job of adjusting the ropes.

brought his palms together three times—and on the third beat, the trigger-timbers swung, the trap dropped, and the shells came crashing down. The day was hot as are all summer days in Washington. The task was grewsome. But worse remained. When the rehearsal was ended, the men were told off to dig four graves. Then they were dismissed until the following day.

July 7, 1865

July 7, 1865, dawned hot and sultry. Coxshall and his associates reported early for duty. They were taken to the scene of execution and ordered to their places. The execution was set for 2 o'clock. But there was a long delay. Public sentiment was not all in favor of hanging Mrs. Surratt. Her guilt was not too certain and she was a woman. Payne insisted that she knew nothing of the crime. Gen. Winfield Scott Hancock, in charge of the arsenal and execution, waited hours hoping for a reprieve from President Johnson. When all hope was gone, the death march commenced.

A little gate behind the scaffold opened. Mrs. Surratt came first, dressed in black and heavily veiled. Two priests supported her for she staggered from side to side at every step. Soldiers followed. Then came Atzerodt and his minister. He wore a long white nightcap and would have been ridiculous in other circumstances. Harold came next and Payne last of all. Excepting Payne, each was on the verge of collapse. Each had to pass his own grave and brush his own coffin to reach the gallows steps. Payne glanced down carelessly, then drew himself up and marched on. He wore a straw hat taken from an officer, nor was it removed until the death cap was placed.

The condemned were led up the stairs. Then, for the first time, Coxshall realized that Mrs. Surratt and Payne were to be placed upon his scaffold leaf. It was deathly hot

and close. Coxshall was seized with an overwhelming nausea. He pulled himself together with an effort.

"The quartet were seated in arm-chairs," Coxshall told me. "Mrs. Surratt was placed on the right. Next was Payne. Then came Harold and Atzerodt. As a special favor, an umbrella was held over the head of Mrs. Surratt. The warrant and findings were read. From my post, I could hear every word. Then the chairs were removed, and the executioners bound their victims.

## "It Hurts"

"I heard the last words of Mrs. Mary E. Surratt. As the ropes were adjusted, she complained: 'It hurts.'

"'It won't hurt long,' was the answer.

"After what seemed ages, eaps were placed and nooses adjusted. Payne stepped forward before he was bound and stood on the very edge of the trap above me. The other three barely passed the breaking line. Mrs. Surratt had to be pushed on and even then stood far back.

"Col. Rath came down and took his position. Three times he brought his palms together. Three times, as we had rehearsed, we swung the timber, knocking the prop away at the last swing.

"There was a crash. Three of the bodies shot straight down; but Mrs. Surratt lurched forward, slid off, and swung to and fro like a pendulum.

"Twenty minutes later, the four were pronounced dead. ten minutes later, the detail cut down the bodies and buried them. Bottles containing the names were placed in each coffin. The graves were filled. We tramped back to our quarters, shaken by the ordeal though all of us had served on many a battlefield."

Coxshall died at his home in Beaver Dam a few years ago. So far as records show, none of the active participants in the execution is alive today.



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ADELINE ROBERTS  
AUTOGRAPHS OF FAMOUS PERSONS  
53 West 57th Street  
New York

February 2, 1940.

Mr. Louis A. Warren, Director,  
Lincoln National Life Foundation,  
Fort Wayne, Ind.

Dear Sir:

I have been asked to sell a letter of Mary E. Surratt written on the morning of the day she was hung, protesting her innocence; and a letter of her daughter Anna to President Johnson asking for the delivery to her of the remains of her mother for interment in consecrated grounds. It is known that the War Department made delivery of the remains of Mary E. Surratt to her daughter Anna on February 8, 1869.

I have had the Anna Surratt letter in my possession for some time, and I think I quoted it to you at the time the owner left it with me for sale. He has now decided to sell the Mary Surratt letter, too, and wishes me to offer them together.

These letters I think are most unusual and well worth a place in any Lincoln collection. It is interesting to note that public sentiment in regard to Mrs. Surratt has veered around and, so far as I know, all modern biographers and historians of the period now believe in her innocence of any complicity in the plot to assassinate the President.

If you think the letters would interest you, I will be glad to hear from you.

Sincerely yours,

*Adeline Roberts*

Surratt

ADELINE ROBERTS  
AUTOGRAPHS OF FAMOUS PERSONS  
44 WEST 9TH STREET  
NEW YORK, N. Y.

Anna E. Surratt. An ALS, 1 p, 8vo, to Andrew Johnson, asking the privilege of removing the remains of her deceased mother, to have them interred in consecrated ground, etc. Upon the reverse appears an endorsement, in another hand: "Anna E. Surratt. Asks authority to remove the remains of her deceased Mother. A copy sent to the War Dept. with the following endorsement: 'The Honorable the Secretary of War will cause to be delivered to Anna E. Surratt the remains of her Mother, Mary E. Surratt, for the purpose set forth in the within communication. Andrew Johnson. Febr. 5th, 1869'". The price of this letter is \$25.

I have the usual documents and letters of Lincoln of no particular historical value.

I have letters of the following people, but none refers to Lincoln, so presume they would not interest you.

Gustavus V. Fox  
F. E. Spinner  
Stephen A. Douglas  
Hannibal Hamlin  
John T. Ford  
Joseph K. Barnes  
Boston Corbett  
David Davis  
John Sartain  
Andrew Johnson  
Galusha A. Grow  
Schuyler Colfax  
Horace Greeley  
John G. Nicolay  
Ida M. Tarbell  
Lew Wallace  
Robert T. Lincoln  
Lord Lyons  
J. S. Black  
J. P. Usher.

William H. Seward  
Salmon P. Chase  
Wm. P. Fessenden  
Hugh McCulloch  
Simon Cameron  
Edwin M. Stanton  
Edward Bates  
James Speed  
Montgomery Blair  
William Dennison  
Gideon Welles  
Charles A. Dana  
John Hay  
W. O. Stoddard  
August V. Kautz  
Joseph Holt  
Caleb B. Smith  
A. J. Beveridge  
E. A. Hitchcock

Sincerely yours,

*Adeline Roberts*



February 5, 1940

Adeline Roberts  
53 W. 57th St.  
New York City, N. Y.

Dear Madam:

I wish to acknowledge receipt of your letter of February 2 to Dr. Warren who is absent from Fort Wayne on his annual speaking itinerary.

Your letter will be held in suspense until he returns to Fort Wayne some time the early part of April.

If you would care to forward to me any additional information which you have about the letters offered for sale, I should be pleased to have the full information for Dr. Warren when he returns to Fort Wayne.

Yours very truly,

MAC:BS  
M.A. Cook

Librarian

# Many Tragedies After Lincoln's Assassination

## Norristown Soldier Served Last Breakfast to Mrs. Surratt

Few are living who recall the tragedy that smote this country 75 years ago tomorrow night. But I have talked with a man who was present in the theatre when Lincoln was shot to death by Booth.

And I knew well another man whose job as a young soldier enabled him daily to see the four conspirators who were hanged. One of the others who was imprisoned gave my old friend a pair of cuff links.

This man served to Mrs. Surratt her last breakfast before she died on the gallows. And he once ordered the mighty General Grant to stop smoking in the corridor outside the military court room.

Lincoln was scheduled to come to Philadelphia in May, 1865, when the Union League opened its new club house in Broad st.

April 14, 1865, was Good Friday. The superstitious said it was a bad omen when the President that evening went to Ford's Theatre in Washington to see a theatrical performance.

The bullet fired by John Wilkes Booth into the back of Lincoln's head at about 10 o'clock did not cause his death until close to 7 o'clock Saturday morning. But the President was unconscious all that time.

Secretary of War Stanton, standing beside the death bed on that gloomy morning, spoke the official notice of the President's death: "Now he belongs to the ages."

### Montgomery County Soldier

Alfred C. Gibson, who resided for many years in Germantown, was a young soldier from Montgomery county. His father was a friend of Major General John F. Hartranft, whose home was Norristown, and who afterward was Governor of Pennsylvania.

Due to his father's influence, young Gibson got an appointment, so he told me, as a clerk on the military staff of General Hartranft. And the latter was Provost Marshal at the city of Washington during the trial of the Lincoln conspirators.

It was General Hartranft's job to see that nothing interfered with the trial of that group of assassins. And it was young Gibson's job to attend daily the trials.

Gibson, of course, was in the blue uniform of a soldier. One day, he told me, he saw a quiet, smallish man smoking a cigar in the corridor outside the trial room.

He called the man's attention to a sign upon the wall which read, "No Smoking." The officer, whom Gibson had never seen, looked at the sign and without a word threw away his cigar.

That man was General Grant, who had commanded a million Union soldiers, but he obeyed the order of a boy soldier and stopped smoking.

### Mrs. Surratt's Breakfast

Among those tried as conspirators was McLaughlin, who got a long prison sentence. He died on Dry Tortugas of yellow fever.

Dr. Mudd, another conspirator and the Maryland surgeon who reset Booth's broken leg, when the latter was fleeing from captors, was also at Dry Tortugas prison. His heroic work there during the yellow fever outbreak brought him a shortened sentence.

Gibson told me he liked McLaughlin best of the conspirators. He often pitched quoits with him in the military prison courtyard. And it was he who gave the cuff links to the boy soldier from Norristown.

Gibson was very positive in the belief that Mrs. Surratt was guilty of helping Booth and the others to plot the death of Lincoln. But he was not so positive that she should have been hanged, which was her fate.

When the execution of the four doomed to die took place, Gibson was assigned the task of trying to comfort Mrs. Surratt's daughter, which he said was no easy thing to perform.

"I often helped," he said, "in attending to the meals served to the prisoners. I took Mrs. Surratt her last breakfast."

### Theatre Party Tragedies

No other theatre party ever suffered such a remarkable number of tragedies as did that of President Lincoln 75 years ago.

Mrs. Lincoln, who was with him, really never recovered fully from that shock. Some years later it was necessary for her distinguished son, Robert Todd Lincoln, to have his mother confined to an institution.

One turn her warped mind took was to buy enormous quantities of expensive clothing she never wore.

The Lincolns had two guests with them. Major Rathbone and Miss Harris, daughter of a U. S. Senator. The young couple were then engaged to be married and they were married. But the Major went violently insane and killed his bride. He never recovered.

Booth, who stole into the theatre box and shot Lincoln, leaped to the stage and broke his leg. His flight of weeks resulted in the most memorable man-hunt in American history.

When finally trapped in a tobacco barn in Virginia, Booth was shot in the back of the head in almost the exact place where his bullet had struck Lincoln. Booth lived in great agony for a couple of hours.

Boston Corbett, a Union soldier, was popularly supposed to have fired the bullet which killed Booth, but some historians insist that Booth, who had a pistol, shot himself.

Corbett was a sort of religious fanatic and he later went insane. Lincoln's body was brought to Philadelphia and lay in state in Independence Hall.

GIRARD.

PHILADELPHIA

4-13-40

Philadelphia Inquirer



# LINCOLN LORE

Bulletin of the Lincoln National Life Foundation - - - - - Dr. Louis A. Warren, Editor  
Published each week by The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company, Fort Wayne, Indiana

Number 836

FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

April 16, 1945

## THE CASE FOR THE U.S.A.

Four score years ago on April 14, 1865, Abraham Lincoln was murdered. Any student who is familiar with the voluminous writings of the past few years, featuring some phase of the nation's greatest tragedy, must have observed the general tendency to make a quasi-hero out of the assassin, and innocent, or greatly wronged, individuals out of those who were implicated in the preliminaries or aftermath of the crime.

One of these books containing 272 pages came out in 1943 under the title, *The Case for Mrs. Surratt*. It seems as if the time is ripe for someone to come to the defense of Uncle Sam and argue *The Case for the U.S.A.* Just now the world is deeply concerned about justice being meted out to those who are known to have been arch criminals against society. Discussion of the subject of retribution has created a proper atmosphere for considering the general reaction of the people in 1865 toward the conspirators, who contemplated a mass murder of the heads of our Democratic government, and actually were successful in assassinating the President and seriously wounding the Secretary of State. Only a series of co-incidents repulsed still more disastrous results.

It is horrifying to contemplate what might have happened if the people had taken justice into their own hands after the assassination of the President. Only with the assurance that recompense for the tragedy would be swift and adequate was there an apparent willingness to allow the law to take its course. The military courts seemed to have proper jurisdiction in a case where the Commander in Chief of the Army was the victim, which at least gave the people the assurance that with military supervision there would be no political barriers standing in the way of immediate punishment. It is to be regretted that one woman was caught in the mesh of the law's net.

As might be expected, sympathizers with the assassin have claimed some other man than Booth was shot in Garrett's barn in Virginia. Regardless of what may be done with any Hitler that may pay the price of the dictator's madness, German devotees of the Fuehrer will never admit the real Hitler has been apprehended.

It is doubtful if any dead murderer, examined before the days of finger prints, ever was more positively identified by evidence which he carried on his very corpse than the body of John Wilkes Booth. He was branded on his left hand with the tattooed initials of J.W.B. He carried a recognized mark of a surgeon's scalpel where Dr. May had removed a fibroid tumor. Fillings in his teeth were identified by the assassin's dentist. A fractured leg, injured by the leap to the stage from the theatre box, presented additional evidence, which supplemented with an impressive collection of personal belongings found on the body, proved beyond any question of a doubt, as one author puts it, "This was he."

There is no phase of the whole aftermath of the proceedings featured by book, periodical, and the press which is more ridiculous than the attempt to convince the American people that the Booth autopsy, directed by Surgeon General Barnes, miscarried, and John Wilkes Booth was never apprehended, but escaped punishment for his crime. It would be a sad reflection on the military court, indeed, if they allowed the arch criminal to go "scott free" and centered their energies on the conviction of the secondary parties in the conspiracy.

When one realizes that almost to a man the people of the North believed that the assassination of Lincoln was due to a southern conspiracy in which Booth was but a

hired henchman, it will be observed how necessary it was to guide the infuriated mobs into channels of more sane and deliberate counsels. That no southern statesmen were given to the gallows by angry mobs for a crime in which apparently they had no direct part has been a most commendable fact to remember.

The editor of the *New York Independent*, after having viewed the remains of the President ten days after his death, although much more conservative than many of his contemporaries, gives us a fairly accurate interpretation of the minds of the people with respect to the assassination in these words:

### "What Shall Be The Retribution?"

"This day, the dead body of the murdered President passed through our city to a grave in the prairies. Perhaps the sorrow of a great nation is the sublimest spectacle possible on earth. The pilgrimage of these sacred ashes through the land is the most pathetic incident of American history. The bier of Washington was not wet with so many tears.

"Walking mutely past this coffin, and gazing at the face of the martyred dead, half-a-million citizens demand that this murder remain not unavenged. Seeking not to inflame but to calm the public mind, we re-echo this demand with all the solemnity due to the majestic occasion. Although Abraham Lincoln bore the most forgiving of human tempers; although, were he now dictating terms to the rebellion, he would prove himself the most clement of conquerors; although, could his frozen lips speak, he would say, Deal mercifully with my assassin; yet, if this black deed be not punished to the full measure of Christian retribution, the murdered man's sepulcher—be it locked, and barred, and monumented—will not be able to confine his troubled ghost from wandering through the unquiet land and moaning at his wrongs unredressed.

"But what measure of vengeance can equal the stupendous crime? Though the assassin were sawn asunder, yet would not the offense be atoned, nor justice be appeased. The vial of retributive wrath is too large and full to be squandered upon the single head of a trembling wretch who now skulks from the eye of the world. Let the great punishment fall upon the first, the chief, the arch criminal in this crime of crimes. The murderer of the President is SLAVERY....

"Let the American people, when they shall have buried the corpse which now they watch, arise from their sackcloth and ashes to forget amnesty and to execute judgment. Speaking without passion, without malice, without enmity against the guiltiest traitor of all the great conspiracy, without eagerness to spill a drop of any man's blood—nevertheless, for the sake of Law, of Liberty, of the Republic, we declare that if treason be a crime, and if crime deserve punishment, then Jefferson Davis and his Cabinet and Congress should be tried with a just trial, and abide a just doom."

While every American citizen should be thankful that retribution for the incomparable crime was limited to the small group directly associated with the arch assassin, we are not yet quite ready to prepare post-mortem decorations for the criminals or create memorials to their memory. It would be refreshing, indeed, to have some competent writer who really feels that the preservation of the Union was a commendable achievement to present, *The Case for the U.S.A.*





## Whitewashing Mary Surratt



**D**IOGENES went about in broad daylight with a lantern, looking for an honest man. The Roman Catholic Hierarchy also is on the hunt for an honest man, particularly if he should happen to stand in its way. Then it will not hesitate at anything. Whatever else can be said for Lincoln, and much can be said for him, he was honest. But the position of Lincoln, secure as it may seem, is not spared from the attack of the calumniator, who, with unremitting malignity and sly subtlety, seeks to bring reproach upon this man in order to clear the skirts of the religious system which not only was involved in his untimely death, but which was, according to unimpeachable testimony, the prime mover in accomplishing it.

But why would the Roman Catholic Hierarchy wish to destroy the president of the United States? On more than one occasion Lincoln had come to grips with representatives of that Hierarchy, and where a man as honest as he comes into close contact with those opponents of liberty, there is, inevitably, conflict. "Lincoln's prophecy," quoted by Chiniquy, sums up Lincoln's suspicions of the Roman Catholic Hierarchy:

I do not pretend to be a prophet. But though not a prophet, I see a very dark cloud on our horizon. And that dark cloud is coming from Rome. It is filled with tears of blood. It will rise and increase, till its flanks will be torn by a flash of lightning, followed by a fearful peal of thunder. Then a cyclone such as the world has never seen will pass over this country,

spreading ruin and desolation from north to south. After it is over, there will be long days of peace and prosperity: for Popery, with its Jesuits and merciless Inquisition, will have been forever swept away from our country.

To destroy the deep impression which the life and death of Lincoln have made upon the American people is not an easy matter, and it comes with something of amazement that a play should be introduced with the evident purpose of justifying one who was inextricably involved in his assassination.

### *"The Story of Mary Surratt"*

On February 2 of this year there appeared in the *New York Times*, in a prominent position, an advance notice of a forthcoming stage play, together with a large picture of the chief characters in striking pose. "The Story of Mary Surratt" was to be presented at a second-rate theater during the following week.

The play made its appearance at a sardonically "propitious" time, shortly before the anniversary of Lincoln's birth, and the report of its performance appeared in Monday's papers, February 10. It was not a successful venture, judging from the subdued tone of the report, which says of John Patrick, the author, that his excursion among the archives convinced him that Mary Surratt was erroneously accused.

But a more reliable testimony is available than this dramatic attempt to make the hard-faced Mary Surratt a sweet, innocent little woman, as portrayed by



Dorothy Gish. A priest who knew priests and their subjects tells a more convincing story. In his book, *Fifty Years in the Church of Rome*, he says:

In the book of the testimonies given in the prosecution of the assassin of Lincoln, published by Ben Pitman, and in the two volumes of the trial of John Surratt in 1867, we have the legal and irrefutable proof that the plot of the assassins of Lincoln was matured, if not started in the house of Mary Surratt, No. 561 H Street, Washington City, D.C. But who were living in that house, and who were visiting that family? The legal answer says: "The most devoted Catholics in the city!" The sworn testimonies show more than that. They show that it was the common rendezvous of the priests of Washington. Father Lahiman swears that he was living with Mrs. Surratt, in the same house!

What does the presence of so many priests, in that house, reveal to the world? No man of common sense, who knows anything about the priests of Rome, can entertain any doubt that, not only they knew all that was going on inside those walls, but that they were the advisers, the counselors, the very soul of that infernal plot. . . . No one, if he is not an idiot, will think and say that those priests, who were the personal friends and the father confessors of Booth, John Surratt, Mrs. and Misses Surratt, could be constantly there without knowing what was going on, particularly when we know that every one of those priests was a rabid rebel at heart.

#### *Perjury of Mrs. Surratt*

Chiniquy, a man who was so honest that he earned the undying hatred of the church which he conscientiously strove to serve for fifty years, says of Mrs. Surratt:

In the very moment when the government officer orders her to prepare herself, with her daughter, to follow him as prisoners, at about 10 P.M., Payne, the would-be murderer of Seward, knocks at the door and wants to see Mrs. Surratt. But instead of having Mrs. Surratt to open the door, he finds himself con-

fronted, face to face, with the government detective, Major Smith, who swears [to the following facts]:

"I questioned him in regard to his occupation, and what business he had at the house, at this late hour of the night. He stated that he was a laborer, and had come to dig a gutter [at near midnight!], at the request of Mrs. Surratt.

"I went to the parlor door, and said: 'Mrs. Surratt, will you step here a minute?' She came out, and I asked her: 'Do you know this man, and did you hire him to come and dig a gutter for you?' She answered, raising her right hand; 'Before God, sir, I do not know this man, I have never seen him, and I did not hire him to dig a gutter for me.'"

But it was proved after, by several unimpeachable witnesses, that she knew very well that Payne was a personal friend of her son, who, many times, had come to her house, in company with his friend and pet, Booth.

Of the character in the play who takes the part of Mary Surratt's daughter, the reviewer says: "Elizabeth Ross underscores the fine impression she made in her only previous Broadway appearance in the title role of 'Song of Bernadette'." One wonders whether this lady, in portraying the "sweet" Miss Surratt, uttered the sarcastic remark which several witnesses actually heard Miss Surratt utter. Said she, the next day after Lincoln's assassination, when the whole country was wrapped in gloom, "The death of Abraham Lincoln is no more than the death of any nigger in the army." So saying she expressed both her and her church's contempt for the oppressed slave as well as for Lincoln. Commenting on this remark, Chiniquy says, "Where did she get that maxim, if not from her church! Had not that church recently proclaimed through her highest legal and civil authority, the devoted Roman Catholic, Judge Taney, in his Dred-Scott decision, that Negroes have no right, which the white is bound to respect?"

### **Mrs. Surratt's Religious Calm**

The report of the play continues: "Reverdy Johnson, who defended her, gives her the moral courage to die, promising that in miscarriages of justice such as this men of good-will are inflamed to set their houses aright." That is the silliest effort to explain Mrs. Surratt's calm that can well be imagined. Why did the writer of the play in this instance leave the priest out of the picture? Mr. Chiniquy's account is more convincing by far, displaying at the same time better knowledge of human nature. He says:

I ask it from any man of common sense, could Jeff Davis have imparted such a religious calm, and self-possession to that woman, when her hands were just reddened with the blood of the President, and she was on her way to trial? No! Such *sang froid*, such calm in that soul, in such a terrible and solemn hour, could only come from the teachings of those Jesuits who, for more than six months, were in her house, showing her a crown of eternal glory, if she would help to kill the monster apostate—Lincoln.

It was certainly no political or patriotic calm that was displayed by Mary Surratt. She had the approval of her church and her priest, and that was sufficient for her mind, which asked no questions, admitted no reason, saw no incongruity in the whole horrible business.

### **The Priests Escape**

Mrs. Surratt was a tool, but hardly an innocent tool, in the hands of the priests. General Baker, commenting on the atrocious event, says: "I mention, as an exceptional and remarkable fact, that every conspirator in custody is, by education, a [Roman] Catholic." (Nor is this a reflection on all Catholics, by any means. The Jesuits know how to select those among the laity who can best serve their purpose. The more intelligent and honest Catholics never get to know of their workings.) The Jesuit priests, who, beyond a reasonable doubt, collaborated

in, if they did not contrive the plot, escaped, Mr. Chiniquy reports:

Several of the government men . . . told me: "We had not the least doubt that the Jesuits were at the bottom of that great iniquity; we even feared, sometimes, that this would come out so clearly before the military tribunal, that there would be no possibility of keeping it out of public sight. This was not through cowardice, as you think, but through a wisdom which you ought to approve, if you can not admire it. Had we been in days of peace, we know that with a little more pressure on the witnesses, many priests would have been compromised; for Mrs. Surratt's house was their common rendezvous; it is more than probable that several of them might have been hung. But the civil war was hardly over. The Confederacy, though broken down, was still living in millions of hearts; murderers and formidable elements of discord were still seen everywhere, to which the hanging or exiling of those priests would have given a new life. Riots after riots would have accompanied and followed their execution. We thought we had had enough of blood, fires, devastations and bad feelings. We were all longing after days of peace; the country was in need of them. We concluded that the best interests of humanity was to punish only those who were publicly and visibly guilty; that the verdict might receive the approbation of all, without creating any new bad feelings.

### **The Play Was a Failure**

The effort to dramatize Mrs. Surratt was an admitted failure. The combination of stupidity, superstition and perfidy which could not be entirely camouflaged prevented her portrayal as a convincingly true-to-life character. The reviewer says, "There are moments when the characters do not come alive." They could hardly be that, being, as they actually were, fictitious. Nothing in the lives of the sordid individuals involved in the murder of Lincoln would have vital appeal from any conceivable angle. Up to now the effort to whitewash Mary Surratt has failed.



DR 11, 100

## Woman Who Fed John Wilkes Booth Dies

In Butler, Pa., last week died Mrs. Lettie Dade, 86, wife of the Reverend D. B. Dade, retired pastor of the Shiloh Baptist Church. Her claim to fame: she cooked supper for John Wilkes Booth the night after he assassinated Abraham Lincoln in Ford's Theater, Washington.

Mrs. Dade was a servant in the Maryland home of Dr. Samuel Mudd that unfortunate night when a stranger with a broken leg appeared at Dr. Mudd's home to have his injured leg set. Unaware that he was tending Lincoln's assassin, Dr. Mudd treated Booth, then ordered dinner for him. Mrs. Dade killed and cooked a chicken. Booth ate it, then left despite Dr. Mudd's protest that he was unfit to travel.

In the popular passion following Lincoln's death, Dr. Mudd was tried and convicted for abetting a criminal, and sent to prison on the Dry Tortugas off southern Florida. He was released years later after he had performed heroic services in a yellow fever epidemic there. The



She served a dinner to Lincoln's assassin.

story of Dr. Mudd was lately made into a talkie, "The Prisoner of Shark Island."

Mrs. Dade had lived in Butler 14 years. She went there from Alexandria, Va.

**HIS TESTIMONY SENT MRS. SURRAT TO THE  
GALLOWS**

165. LINCOLN. WEICHMAN, LOUIS J. A. L. S. 8vo, 1867. Dealing with the verification of the handwriting of one of the conspirators, John Surrat. Weichman was one of the chief witnesses during the Assassination trial. A school friend of John Surrat who had taken rooms in his mother's boarding house and was actually the last person to talk with John W. Booth before the assassination, having visited him on behalf of Mrs. Surrat. His testimony contributed a great deal to the conviction and execution of the conspirators. WE NEVER SAW AN AUTOGRAPH OF THIS MAN, WHOSE TESTIMONY CONTRIBUTED SO MUCH TO THE ORIGIN OF THE "CONSPIRACY FABLE". Likely Unique specimens. 25.00.

Washington, July 5, 1867.

Will you have the kindness to send me at once the song in Surrat's handwriting which I gave you last winter called "Paddy's Ode to the Prince". It is a very peculiar handwriting of his and the Government wishes it for the purpose of comparing it with other papers in its possession. Send it immediately, Do not forget. I promise not only to return it to you but to give you several other autographs of the same party.

LOUIS J. WEICHMANN.



## Why Mrs. Surratt Was Not Spared

To the Editor of The Star:

A recent correspondent of The Star, who signed himself Washingtonian, laid before your readers a part of the infamous story of the execution of Mrs. Surratt, but only a part. May I supply some of the missing information?

The military commission that tried Mrs. Surratt voted 6 to 3 to acquit her. The Judge Advocate General, Joseph Holt, who had a lifelong hatred of Roman Catholics, as his papers plainly show, and his chief, Secretary Stanton, were dissatisfied with this verdict—naturally. If it stood, then the whole case they had built up against Jefferson Davis and other Confederate leaders would fall to the ground. So, in the absence of the attorneys for Mrs. Surratt, and in a secret session of the court, Holt and John A. Bingham, the trial lawyer, reargued the case they had presented against her, but finding that this did not move the majority to change their position, Holt made this foul suggestion to the court: "If this verdict stands you will be the objects of a venomous assault from the public. Change this verdict to guilty, and with it send up a plea for executive clemency, and I will take it to the President. He will grant the clemency and the odium will thus be on him."

So it was done. Three members of the court changed their votes, thus giving the legal majority of 6 to 3 for a conviction. Then the plea for clemency was written out and signed by the original six who had voted her acquittal.

Judge Holt carried the verdict of the court to the President and read it to him. He did not carry the plea for clemency. Nor, in his discussion of the case with the President, did he refer to the latter. After getting the President's approval of the verdict, he took up a pen, and in the presence of the Chief Magistrate of the Nation, knowing that the court had acquitted Mrs. Surratt and had recommended clemency in her behalf, wrote the following: "• • • the proceedings were regular, and • • • the findings were fully justified by the evidence. It is thought that the highest considerations of public justice, as well as the future security of the lives of the officers of the Government demand that the sentences based on these findings should be carried into execution." This he signed: "J. Holt, Judge Adv. General."

**President Johnson Shocked.**

Judge Holt and President Johnson, some

years later, had a bitter controversy over whether the President had seen the plea for clemency. Mr. Johnson denied that he had. At least two members of his cabinet saw the papers on his desk, and though Holt appealed to them to support him in his contention, they refused. One of them, Attorney General Speed, was his lifelong intimate friend. Montgomery Blair went to the White House two days after Mrs. Surratt's execution and asked the President why he had refused to heed the plea of the court for clemency in her behalf. Mr. Johnson was shocked, and replied that he had never seen it. He was telling the truth.

Immediately after the execution of Mrs. Surratt, Benn Pitman, the official reporter, published the testimony in the trial of the conspirators. Its accuracy is attested by Judge Holt. On page 248 is the verdict in the case of Mrs. Mary E. Surratt, but not one word about the petition for clemency. Deception could not be carried further.

It is not without interest to see what was the fate of those who had a part in this awful transaction. Stanton died by his own hand or was murdered. Holt lived to a great age, hated and avoided by every one, and one day he fell down the stairs of his home on New Jersey avenue and sustained injuries from which he shortly died. Gen. David Hunter, who presided at Mrs. Surratt's trial, who insulted Reverdy Johnson, chief counsel for her, and drove him from the case, committed suicide at his home on I street. Gen. L. C. Baker, Stanton's detective, who destroyed the evidence that had been assembled by Col. William P. Wood, head of the Secret Service, and others, going to prove Mrs. Surratt's innocence, was murdered by poison. John Lloyd, the tavernkeeper at Surratt's Tavern, who was one of the chief witnesses against her, fell from a ladder and received injuries that his doctor told him were fatal. Thereupon he dictated and signed a confession of his perjuries against her. Louis J. Weichmann, the chief witness against her, ran a crooked and devious course, blackmailing Holt and others, and then, driven into obscurity by society, lived with bitter memories behind locked doors until death laid a cold hand on him. John A. Bingham died a pauper, living on the bounty of his neighbors at Cadiz, Ohio. Col. Chris Rath, the hangman who placed the noose about her neck, went insane and died in an institution. And Gen. W. S. Hancock, who was in command of the troops at her trial and execution, was defeated for the presidency because of the part he played in her cruel death.

DAVID RANKIN BARBEE.

THE EVENING STAR, Washington, D

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 1949

# New Studies Question Guilt of Woman Hanged

Chicago Daily News 2-17-54  
BY VAN ALLEN BRADLEY

Literary Editor of the Daily News

AT 15 MINUTES past 1 on the hot, windless, suffocating day of April 7, 1865, Mary Eugenia Surratt, a pious, middle-aged keeper of a Washington boarding house, began the short walk from her cell at the Old Capitol (Arsenal) Penitentiary to the gallows.

She had been found guilty of complicity in the assassination of President Lincoln.

Three men walked with her up the 15 creaking, railed steps and were seated before the dangling ropes of the executioner. At 26 minutes past 1 the drops fell from under the scaffold, and at 16 minutes till 2 the four were pronounced dead.



BRADLEY

Mrs. Surratt and her companions—Lewis Payne, David Herold and George A. Atzerodt—were then cut down, placed in boxes and buried a few feet south of the scaffold near the prison wall.

FEW PEOPLE doubted Mrs. Surratt's guilt the day she was hanged. She had been known to give aid to John Wilkes Booth, Lincoln's assassin. Along with his fellow conspirators, including her son, John, Booth had stayed at her boarding house.

In the decades that have passed, however, the conviction has grown ever stronger

★ ★ ★

among the historians that the nation took the life of an innocent woman.

In two new books, "The Case of Mrs. Surratt," by Guy W. Moore, just published, and "Enemies of the State,"\* by Francis X. Busch, to be published Friday, the evidence against Mrs. Surratt is exhaustively reviewed and found wanting.

• • •

MR. MOORE is a Washingtonian and a zealous student of history.

In his detailed examination, he has gone farther than any other historian.

His documented findings: That the military commission that convicted her was in violation of the Constitution; that she was a victim of perjured testimony; that 18 pages of Booth's diary, which might have cleared her on the charge of complicity, were suppressed; and that Judge Advocate Joseph Holt never showed to President Johnson the commission's recommendation for clemency.

• • •

WHILE NOT as exhaustive, the study made by Francis X. Busch, the distinguished Chicago trial lawyer, reaches similar conclusions.

"In the trial of Mrs. Surratt," writes Mr. Busch, "the accepted forms were observed. She was allowed counsel and permitted to offer testimony, other than that of herself, in her own defense.

"The trial, however, was wholly lacking in the spirit and substance which cherished American tradition regards as the essence of a truly fair and impartial trial."

Mr. Busch's "Enemies of the State" is the fourth volume of his series on notable American trials. This book also covers the cases of Al Capone, Albert Fall and Julius and Ethel Rosenberg.

\*THE CASE OF MRS. SURRETT, by Guy W. Moore (University of Oklahoma Press, \$3).

ENEMIES OF THE STATE, by Francis X. Busch (Bobbs-Merrill, \$3.75).

Chicago Daily News  
2-17-54



## INSIDE OF BOOKS

# *A Tardy Verdict On Mrs. Surratt*

BY FRANK O'NEILL



Washington was scorching hot, windless, and suffocating the afternoon of Friday, July 7, 1865. The public was still in an uproar over President Lincoln's assassination. An outcry for vengeance was about to be answered by the hanging of a woman and three men.

The four had been convicted by a military court of plotting Lincoln's death with John Wilkes Booth, the president's murderer. The trial lasted six weeks.

The woman was Mrs. Mary E. Surratt, a church-going widow who operated a Washington boarding house. Guilt of the three men has never been challenged. They were David E. Herold, Lewis Payne, and George Azerodt. Four other conspirators were sentenced to prison.

MRS. SURRATT was the first woman put to death by the U. S. government for conspiracy. She protested her innocence to the end, and thereby set in motion a gaggle of controversy.

No sooner had the trap been sprung than loud claims were made that justice had miscarried. New evidence began to come in. Historians since have built up an enormous bibliography proclaiming the widow's innocence. Latest documentary support for this view is presented in *THE CASE OF MRS. SURRATT* by Guy W. Moore (University of Oklahoma Press, \$3), published today.

Mr. Moore patiently has gathered enough evidence to bring the non-stop discussion to a halt. He presents convincing evidence that Mrs. Surratt had no part in the assassination. Moreover, he says, her possible involvement in Booth's original plot to abduct President Lincoln, "cannot be more than a guess."

THE AUTHOR gives the exact timing of the execution details. At 1:15 p. m. the prisoners were marched from their cells in Old Penitentiary into the prison yard where the hangman, Captain Christian Rath, awaited them at the newly built gibbet . . .

" . . . The prisoners walked the short distance to the gallows, up the fifteen creaking, railed steps, and were seated before the dangling ropes . . . Then General Hartranft read the death warrant . . . At twenty-six minutes after one the drops fell from the scaffold. At sixteen minutes after two the prison doctors pronounced the four dead; ten minutes later they were cut down, placed in boxes, and buried a few feet south of the scaffold near the prison wall."

A still-unsolved mystery is the disappearance of a petition for clemency in Mrs. Surratt's behalf, signed by five of the nine martial judges, and sent to President Andrew Johnson. Later the President declared he never saw the petition, and the evidence indicates, but does not prove, it was suppressed by Joseph Holt, the Judge Advocate, or Secretary of War Stanton.



Euclides da Cunha.

ground (where Aparicio Vieira, the bandit, loots, murders and rapes), Bento and Alice, the boy and girl whose story should give the book its point, move weakly. On a stage set for a story of tragic lovers they are rather doll-like.

I can only think that as an artistic subject Lampeão is still too alive, too intense, not half as forgotten as he should be to be recollected in tranquillity. In both these stories his presence seems still too forceful to allow the writer to invent freely.

**O**THER recent publications in Brazil include a definitive biography of one of our most controversial historical characters: Dom Pedro I, who separated Brazil from the Portuguese kingdom of his father, John VI, making this country independent in 1822. The young Brazilian diplomat Sergio Correla da Costa has published in English "Every Inch a King," a short biography of Pedro I; but the book I am referring to is Octavio Tarquinio de Sousa's solid "A Vida de D. Pedro I." This is a three-volume, scholarly study.

Another book that has just hit the bookstalls in Brazil is "Memórias do Cárcere," a posthumous book by Graciliano Ramos, one of our best novelists. His novel "Angústia" was published in English by Knopf under the title of "Anguish" in 1946. In his just published "Prison Memoirs" Ramos evokes in his severe, unadorned style the days he spent behind bars for his communistic ideas.

In the field of translations, Livraria do Globo has just completed publication of the works of Balzac with notes and explanations by Paulo Rénal. Senhor do Globo is issuing volume after volume of Marcel Proust's "A la Recherche du Temps Perdu."

Translations of current writ-

## She Kept The Nest

THE CASE OF MRS. SURRATT: Her Controversial Trial and Execution for Conspiracy in the Lincoln Assassination. By Guy W. Moore. Illustrated. 142 pp. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press. \$3.

By HENRY F. GRAFF

**A** FEW hours after Lincoln was shot, Mary Eugenia Surratt was arrested for complicity in the deed. Less than three months later she was hanged as guilty. In the time that intervened, the wheels of justice had turned inexorably but eccentrically. Mrs. Surratt was not guilty beyond reasonable doubt and Guy W. Moore once again proves it. Since this is the generally held conclusion of historians, here is clearly not a book that can change minds or stir up trouble. But, as a retelling, it has the value of bringing the details up to date with the most recent scholarly evidence.

Mrs. Surratt would naturally have been a suspect even to the most cautious detective. Through her boarding house in Washington had passed John Wilkes Booth and his fellow-conspirators, including her son, John. Thus, as so many were saying, "she kept the nest that hatched the egg." Since it is possible that Mrs. Surratt knew of the abortive original plan to abduct the President, the fact that Booth made a last-minute switch to murder — of which his landlady was in ignorance — made her innocent at law, if not necessarily at heart. As a heroine she is, therefore, not appealing or impressive. Her reputation rests on the nation's judicial execution of her.

**N**ONE of this impugns, of course, the opinion of her confessor that she perished "as innocent of that crime as a babe unborn." Military commissions such as convicted her proved to be in violation of the Constitution; perjured testimony was offered against her; and portions of Booth's diary were suppressed which established beyond quibble that, contrary to the charge, the assassination was not undertaken with the connivance of Confederate officials. In addition, the Judge Advocate failed to show President Johnson the court's recommendation for clemency that might have saved the accused.

Mrs. Surratt had the ill-luck to be tried just as the capture of Jefferson Davis was charging the emotional atmosphere



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P  
Y

Ben Pitman, who invented the shorthand\* system bearing his name, and who was official stenographer at the trial of four persons who were hanged for conspiring in the assassination of President Lincoln, maintained 50 years ago that one of those executed was innocent.

The STAR of February 13, 1912, said Pitman was quoted in a magazine article to the effect that Mrs. Mary Surratt "was entirely innocent of any prior knowledge of participation in the plot. As official recorder of the trial, having heard every word of the testimony, and having previous to the trial written down from the lips of the principal witnesses their stories, I have had the best opportunity of forming a true opinion as to the guilt or innocence of Mrs. Surratt...."

\*The shorthand that I learned - [about forty-five years ago, and I'm still making my living by being able to use it].

April '62.



## Clearance Asked For Mrs. Surratt

Representatives Sickles and Lankford, Democrats of Maryland, have been asked by the Clinton Lions Club to assist in the vindication of Mary Surratt, who was executed for conspiracy in the assassination of President Lincoln.

In a letter to the two Congressmen, Cyril M. Wildes, president of the club, noted that Clinton was Mr. Surratt's home and asked them to help "right an old wrong."

Mrs. Surratt, who was John Wilkes Booth's landlady, was hanged July 7, 1865.

14 April 1963  
OC STNR



The Louisville Times  
Louisville, Kentucky  
March 29, 1963

### ***The Good Name***

Townpeople of Clinton, Md., have petitioned Congress to clear the name of **Mary Surratt**, who was hanged for conspiracy in the assassination of **Abraham Lincoln**. She was convicted after testimony that **John Wilkes Booth** lived in her boarding house while plotting the assassination. . . .

# Surratt Grave Offers Puzzle

By BRIAN KELLY  
Star Staff Writer

The weather-washed lettering on the plain gravestone simply says, "Mrs. Surratt." Below, fresh strands of palm are twisted around the stone's base, and an artificial plant with pink blossoms has been placed on the grave.

Harry L. McCarthy, superintendent of Washington's Mount Olivet Cemetery for 50 years, is baffled by the decorations.

Someone, he says, faithfully tends to Mary E. Surratt's resting place year in and year out.

She was the widow from Surrattsville, Md., who was hanged in July, 1865, on charges she took part in the plot to assassinate President Lincoln 98 years ago today.

But today she has had a host of friends, who are renewing efforts to clear her name.

## Identity Hidden

One of them, it seems, has found her grave.

"It's been going on as long as I can remember," said Mr. McCarthy, who succeeded his father, the late Michael J. McCarthy, as the cemetery superintendent.

Anyone who visits the cemetery more than once usually is recognized by McCarthy, a close associate said yesterday.

Yet, for ten years he has sought without success to learn the identity of the person decorating Mrs. Surratt's grave simply to satisfy his own curiosity.

The potted plant of plastic with pink flowers, he reported yesterday, has been on the grave since last Christmas. The palm strands were placed there sometime since last Sunday—Palm Sunday.

## Visitor Undetected

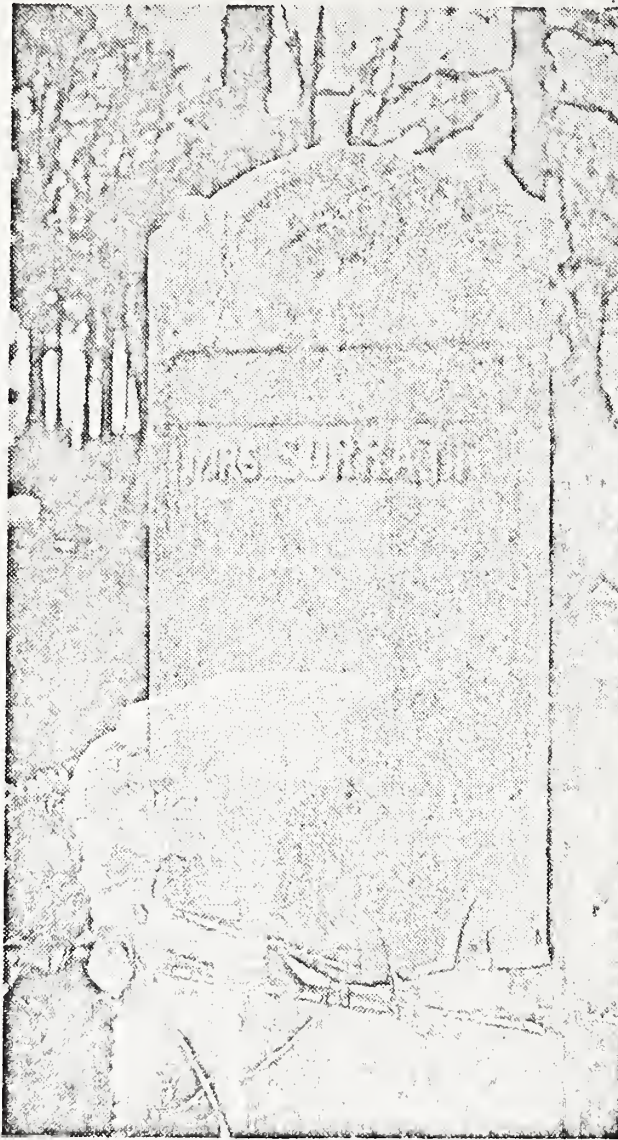
In the summers, fresh-cut flowers appear weekly. "Sometimes," he added, "it may be just a poppy."

Mount Olivet's superintendent thinks the visitors may be descendants of Mrs. Surratt's. But he finds it strange that neither he, nor his workmen in the 85-acre cemetery, have encountered them at the graveside.

Some direct descendents live in Baltimore.

Interest in vindicating Mrs. Surratt was stimulated again in recent weeks when a Maryland Circuit Judge presented two of the State's Congressmen with a petition asking an official review of the case.

Judge Ernest A. Loveless, Jr., a life-long resident of Surrattsville—carried on maps as Clinton, Md.—told Representatives Lankford and Sickles, Democrats, that citizens have tried for years to correct "what



Pink artificial flowers and fresh palm, brought by a persistent but unidentified admirer, decorate the grave of Mrs. Mary Surratt in Mt. Olivet Cemetery.—Star Staff Photo.

## Town's Name Changed

Shortly after Mrs. Surratt's hanging, postal authorities changed the town's name to Clinton.

As many have argued before him, Judge Loveless maintains in his petition that Mrs. Surratt and the others accused in the Lincoln plot should have been tried in a civilian court, instead of receiving a military trial.

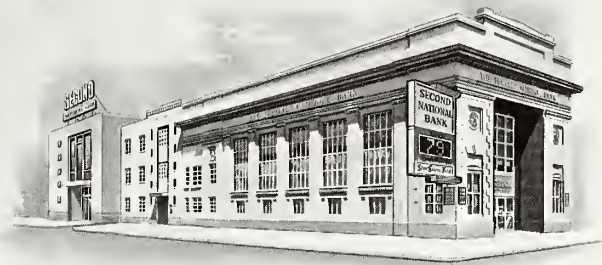
A growing number of historians have argued that much of the evidence implicating Mrs. Surratt has collapsed in the light of subsequent events.

The 45-year-old widow moved from Surrattsville to Washington after her husband, the town postmaster, died. At 604 H street N.W., she kept a boarding house frequented by some of the Lincoln conspirators and visited several times by John Wilkes Booth.

And now someone is heard

THE SUNDAY STAR  
Washington, D. C., April 14, 1963





THE  
SECOND NATIONAL BANK  
OF RICHMOND

RICHMOND, INDIANA 47374

317 - 962-0511

15 May 1967

R. Gerald McMurtry, Editor,  
Lincoln Lore,  
The Lincoln National Life Foundation,  
The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company,  
Fort Wayne, Indiana

Re: (a) The "Lincoln Rocker"  
(b) Your Indpls address  
(c) A new Lincoln Lore find at  
Richmond, Indiana

Dear Doctor McMurtry:

Our group of ten persons from the Wayne County Indiana Civil War Round Table was very impressed and pleased with your recent talk at the War Memorial building in Indianapolis. Mr. Pearce said the tape came out wonderfully clear and it is being used at Sr. High School this week.

Herewith is copy of letter sent to Paul M. Angle on 4 April 1967 as a result of earlier correspondence with you on the subject of the "Lincoln Rocker". We have never had a reply from Mr. Angle. Perhaps he is no longer with the Chicago organization (?).

We also send you a zerox copy of a 7-page paper prepared by Major Mayberry M. Lacey, Adjutant of the 69th Indiana Volunteers, prepared 20 Apr 1910, titled: "Was Mrs. Surratt Implicated In the Assassination of President Lincoln? Some Unwritten History Connected with that terrible (sic) Tragedy." We believe this to be an unusual "find" - probably never before published - and we thought you should have a copy of this at once. It is quite a coincidence that our group was over to hear your talk and four days later come into possession of this unusual bit of Lincoln Lore. The original of this is very clearly written in ink on yellow tablet paper and did not reproduce too clearly, perhaps because of the paper.

If you decide to publish or use Major Lacey's paper in any way, please credit Mrs. Pyle and, if possible, send us a copy of the paper to transmit to her, because people like this should be given every encouragement to share their family mementoes, and we feel she has rendered us a distinct service. Major Lacey died in 1922, and it was not until three or four years ago that the family began to break up the old Osborn home at Fountain City (old Newport) Indiana, wherein the Major and his family had lived for many years. This old home was built in 1840 by Mrs. Lacey's father and is a few doors south of the Levi Coffin home (of Underground Railroad fame). During the major's war service and in the post war service, he acted as a newspaper correspondent for our local Richmond Indiana Palladium- using the pen name "Quilp" and we have many news clippings of the major's writing, both of war date and up through the 1880's and 90's. This is going to be a challenge to us to assemble all in chronological order, because some are pasted down in an old Cincinnati merchant's DayBook of 1850, and scores are laid in loosely. We have also acquired the major's Civil War photograph album. Many of the cartes de visite are of personnel of the 69th Ind. Volunteers, activated at Richmond, Ind. in 1862.

Respectfully,

Argus E. Osborn

Was Mrs Surratt Implicated  
In the Assassination of President  
Lincoln? Some unwritten  
History Connected with that  
terrible tragedy.

In 1877 the writer became  
a resident of Prince Georges  
County, Maryland and for  
five years lived on a farm  
a few miles from Surrattville,  
and only a few hundred yards  
from my home was a little  
Country Store kept by a gentleman  
with whom I became very  
intimately acquainted with  
and we spent many pleasant  
hours together. One evening at



we sat smoking and talking together the subject of Lincoln's assassination was discussed, and my friend remarked that he was well acquainted with several of the accused persons and that Mrs Serratt was his Aunt and being without father or mother his Aunt had cared for him from childhood. That at the time of the assassination he was fifteen years old and lived at the Serratt home in San Antonio.

In the course of our conversation he said there was some very strange things took place which he was unable to explain, and while he could never bring himself to believe that his Aunt was directly implicated in the plot to kill the President, yet, he was wholly unable to

3  
reconcile certain transactions  
which he was familiar with.  
He said he would tell me all  
that he knew of the matter if I would  
pledge him my word that I would  
never repeat it while he lived,  
and I have kept faith with him  
for only a short time since I  
learned of his death and so far  
as I knew and believe he never  
told his secret to any one but my-  
self, and in deference to the  
high regard in which I held him  
and <sup>in which he was held</sup> by all who knew him, I  
will now withhold his name.

He said that on the day before  
the assassination Mrs Gerratt  
visited her old home in Gerrattsville,  
that she drove out from Washington in  
a carriage, that he met her and



took charge of the horse, that she  
 handed him a small box which  
 she directed him to carry into  
 the house and put it away  
 carefully and take good care  
 of it, that most likely her son, or  
 some one of his friends would call  
 for it during the night or on the  
 morrow and charged him on his  
 life that if it was not called for  
 and if he heard of some very  
 strange news from Washington  
 he must take the box and its  
 contents and carefully carry it  
 in the garden in such a way that  
 it could not be discovered and  
 bound him under the most solemn  
 obligations to never reveal the  
 matter.

That soon on the next day the

News of the President's death  
 was spread far and near,  
 and no one having been for  
 the box he slipped it out of  
 the house and carefully carried  
 it in the garden. He said the box  
 was quite heavy and being  
 fastened only with a piece  
 of chord tied round it his boy  
 Pericinity leads him to examine  
 its contents and he found it  
 contained several pistols, some  
 ammunition and several photographs,  
 one or two of which he recognized.  
 That afterwards the Government  
 offered a large reward for  
 a photograph, ~~and~~ of one  
 of the conspirators and that  
 such a photo was in the box.  
 The above is all that is known.



to produce the photo and claim  
the reward.

He assured me  
that the box and its contents  
were still where he had con-  
cealed them and so far as he  
knew and believed, no other  
person in the world knew  
anything about the matter  
and would never know while  
he lived if I kept faith with him.

His version of the transaction was  
a very charitable one so far as  
his aunt was concerned and  
that she was trying to prevent  
the assassination by preventing  
the use of these firearms.

The garden at the old Seaverns  
house is not a large one and  
situated in a little by lane.

7

easily be found and its  
contents would be  
the basis of that  
tragedy of April 65.

M.M.L.

April 20" 1910.



May 16, 1967

Mr. Argus E. Ogborn  
The Second National Bank of Richmond  
Richmond, Indiana 47374

Dear Mr. Ogborn:

I have your interesting letter of May 15th. I have also studied the enclosures.

I am glad to learn that Mr. Pearce was able to make a good tape of my Indianapolis talk before the Civil War Round Table and that it is being used.

I read your letter to Paul M. Angle. Mr. Angle is semi-retired I believe and may be traveling abroad. You should address your letter to Mr. Clement Silvestro who is Director of the Chicago Historical Society.

I can tell you, however, that there is only one Lincoln assassination rocker and that it is located in Greenfield Village in Dearborn, Michigan. The Chicago Historical Society and The Ford's Theatre Museum do not make any claims to have a genuine Lincoln assassination rocker.

The Ford's Theatre Museum has Booth's Deringer pistol, his dagger, spurs, boat and etc. The Chicago Historical Society has many fine authentic relics associated with the Lincolns, including the original bed upon which Lincoln died.

I have read Major Mayberry M. Lacey's paper. It is fascinating and I am glad to have a Xerox copy. At the present time, however, I have no plans to publish it in Lincoln Lore. This is an unusual find, indeed.

It was nice to you to write me in such detail and to provide me with such interesting information.

Yours sincerely,

R. Gerald McMurtry

RGM/cnvr

Found among a group of Civil War  
Ephemera turned over to Gen. Wm P. Benton  
Camp 28 Dept of Ind. Sons of Union Veterans  
of The Civil War at the GAR Memorial  
Hall and Civil War Museum, Centerville,  
Ind. (115 1/2 W. Main St)

by Mrs Lloyd Pyle 334 S. 14 St.,  
Richmond, Ind. granddaughter of  
Major M. M. Lacey - Fri 5/12/67 -  
Wm Ogborn



May 16, 1967

Mr. Argus E. Ogborn  
The Second National Bank of Richmond  
Richmond, Indiana 47374

Dear Mr. Ogborn:

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R. Gerald McMurtry

RCM/cmr

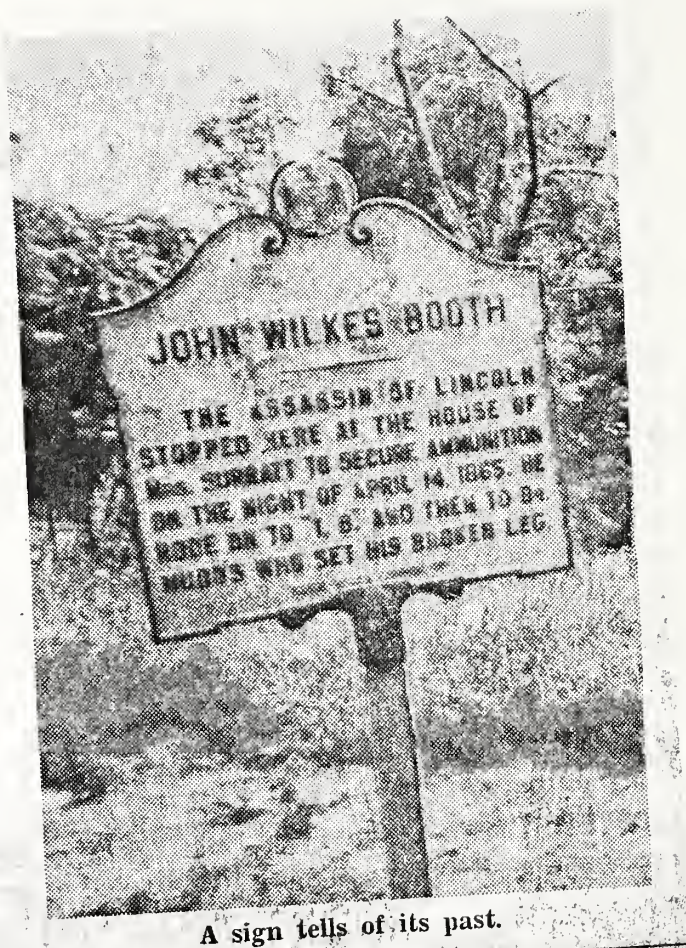
In addition to sheltering Booth briefly on April 14, 1865, the night Lincoln was shot, Mrs. Surratt owned a boarding house at 604 H St. NW where Booth and several other conspirators frequently visited prior to the assassination.

The park and planning commission has applied to the Department of Housing and Urban Development for matching funds to defray the cost of acquiring the Surratt house in Clinton.

A few technical details still remain to be worked out in regard to the purchase contract, but a commission spokesman has expressed confidence that the deal will go through.

The Prince Georges County Commissioners, although not directly involved in the planning agency's effort, unanimously has adopted a resolution expressing their support for the project.

"The unwritten history of the times in our nation which involved a period of great emotional and patriotic stress are symbolized . . . in this still existent structure which is threatened to be destroyed under the pressures of modern-day commercial developments unless steps are taken for its preservation for our posterity," the commissioners said.



A sign tells of its past.



## THE LINCOLN ASSASSINATION

## Mary Surratt Home to Be Preserved

By MARTHA ANGLE

Star Staff Writer

A dilapidated old frame house in Clinton, Md., where John Wilkes Booth stopped a century ago on his flight south after Abraham Lincoln's assassination, may soon become part of the public domain.

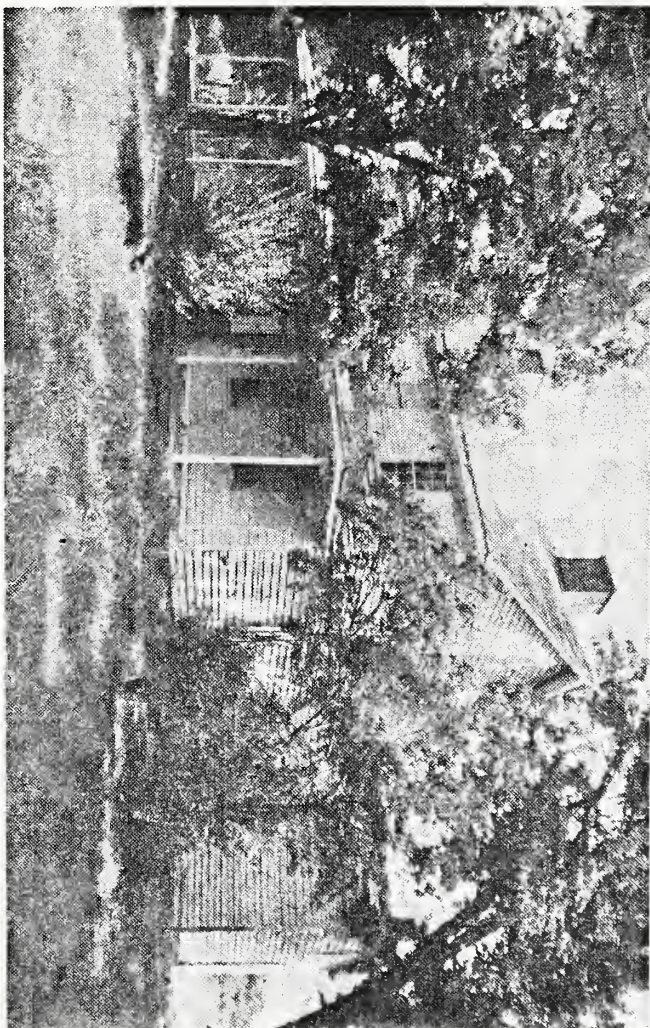
The two-story dwelling, weathered by years of hard use and occasional neglect, belonged to the widow Mary E. Surratt, who was hanged in July, 1865, on charges she took part in the plot to assassinate Lincoln.

Now it is about to be purchased by the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission — possibly with the assistance of federal funds.

The planning commission has signed a contract to buy the Surratt house and an acre of land around it from the current owners, Thomas V. and Blossie Kotlton Miller, for \$76,230.

The commission hopes to restore the building, now in poor condition, and to open the historic home to the public. The property is located on Brandywine Road near Woodyard Road, right near the heart of Clinton. Clinton itself used to be called Surratsville, but the name was changed shortly after Mrs. Surratt was hanged. Despite the change, the old name lingers on among area residents — many of whom have tried in recent years to clear the name of Mary Surratt.

Historians have long debated



The Mary E. Surratt house as it appears today.

-Star Staff

the role Mrs. Surratt played in, the entire assassination plot, and some insist she was condemned to die by a military tribunal on the basis of inconclusive testimony.



# PG Saves Another Landmark

By James C. Wilfong, Jr.

Some things have been taking place on the Clinton-Surrattsville scene to warm the heart of any history buff. On Friday, September 24, the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission and the Committee for the Restoration of the Mary Surratt House jointly staged

Photos by John Calder

formal ceremonies to acquaint the public with plans at long last to take definite steps, under the critical eye of a professional archeologist, to restore Clinton's most famous and most neglected landmark.

The Mary Surratt House is going to be preserved and action will be initiated to obtain for it the status of National Landmark.

Under a brilliant early fall sunny sky a notable gathering of State and County luminaries gathered to address several hundred interested and concerned citizens who had long had feeling for the fading landmark structure.

Neither President Nixon nor Vice President Agnew was able to be present, but both sent their regrets. The same was true of Governor Mandel; but among those who were present and took an active part in the observance were Commissioner W.C. Dutton, Jr. of the Park and Planning Commission, Thomas S. Gwynn, Jr., chairman of the Restoration Committee; Hon. Louis J. Goldstein, Maryland's ebullient Comptroller of the Treasury; Hon. Lawrence J. Hogan, Member of Congress, Hon. William S. James, President, Maryland Senate, on the outskirts of whose hometown, Bel Air, still stands Tudor Hall, the photogenic residence of the "Mad Booths of Maryland"; and Dr. Ernest A. Connally, of the U.S. Department of the Interior. Representing Secretary Rogers C.B. Morton, Hon. William W. Gullett, Prince George's

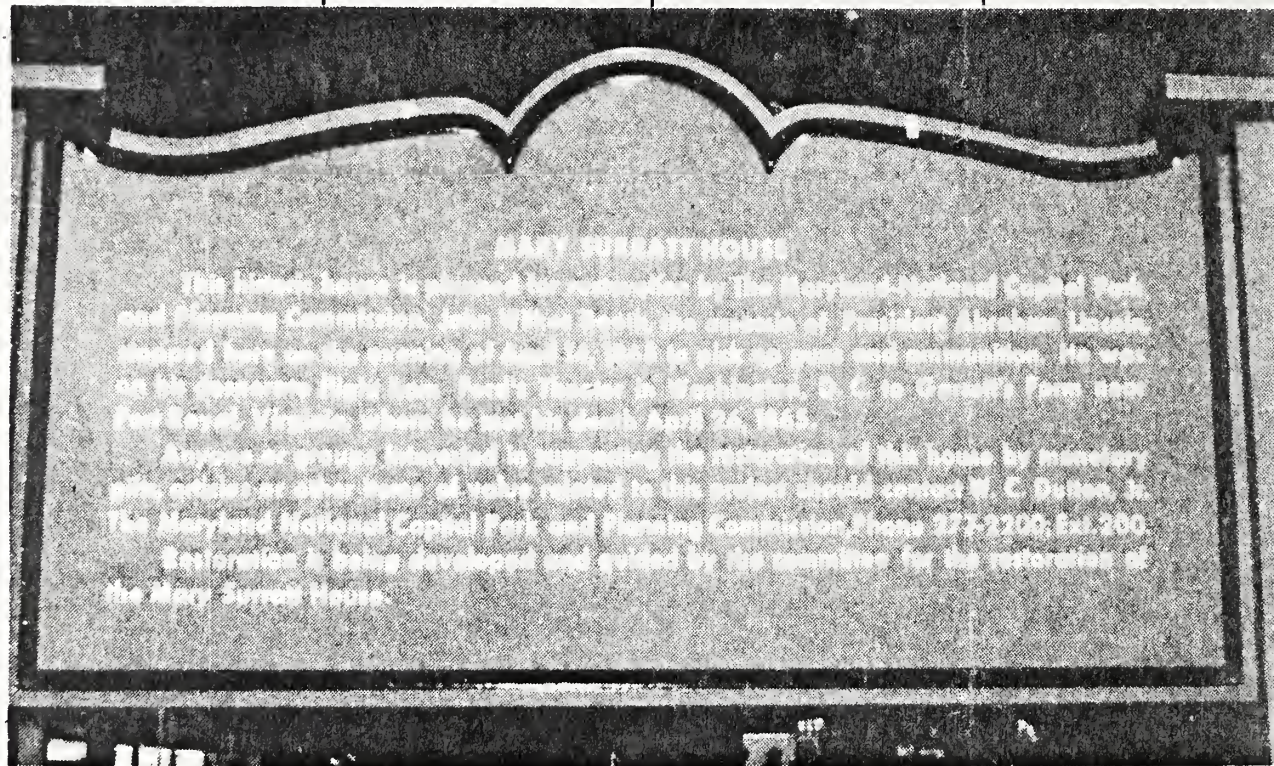
speakers' podium: Francis Burch, Attorney General of Maryland, could not be present, but in his letter of regret he stated that he was a great-grand nephew of Father Jacob A. Walter, who had

been Mrs. Surratt's spiritual advisor and had accompanied her to the scaffold. There were threats in those frenzied times 106 years ago, of trying Father Walter on vague charges of treason for his

refusal to disclose the confidences of the confessional. The indomitable old churchman sleeps today in Mt. Olivet Cemetery, not far from the main entrance off Bladensburg Road. The

same cemetery is the final resting of the ill-fated Mary Surratt, as well as of alcoholic-prone accus generally believed now not have been averse to acti

(Continued to Page B-5)



The history of the Surratt House is succinctly stated on the marker that now stands on its lawn.

County Executive who was born and reared within three blocks of Abraham Lincoln's home in Springfield, Ill.; Hon. Winfield M. Kelly, Jr., Chairman of the Prince George's County Council; and the Hon. Ernest A. Loveless, Jr., associate judge of the Seventh Judicial Circuit, were also present. Each made brief, but apt and interesting remarks which were followed by the unveiling of an impressive flood-lighted sign detailing the restoration effort. A portrait of the unfortunate Mrs. Surratt was also unveiled and placed on display for viewing by the several hundred present. The painting will ultimately hang in the restored House.

Many history-minded people assume that on the death of John Surratt in 1916 the family name died out. Not so. Several family members of later generations were present and John Calder of The News Leader staff secured photographs which appear herewith. Two items of more than passing interest were brought out from the



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The News *Serving The Laurel Area*  
*In The Center of Things* Leader

THE NEWS LEADER, Laurel, Maryland, September 30, 1971

PAGE B-1



Standing around the newly-unveiled portrait of Mary Surratt are Mrs. C. Raymond Surratt (with black handbag), whose husband was the son of John Surratt. Directly behind her is her daughter, Mary S. Kirchner; and another daughter, Helen S. Heisler, has a program clutched in her hand. The gentleman with glasses is also a grandson of John Surratt's and thus a great-grandson of Mary Surratt's; and the other man is Maryland's Comptroller, Louis J. Goldstein. At the left, wearing glasses, is Louise Mudd Arehart, granddaughter of Dr. Samuel A. Mudd. Mary Surratt, John Surratt, and Dr. Mudd were all penalized in varying degrees for the insane and savage act of John Wilkes Booth in murdering President Lincoln.

## the saga of Mary Surratt

THE STORY of the Mary Surratt House is the saga of an American family, a community that bore their name, and an event in American history of such grave importance that it has touched the lives of all Americans ever since the day it occurred. The family was named Surratt, the community Surrattsville, and the event the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, 16th President of the United States.

Our narrative begins late in the summer of 1840, with the marriage of John Harrison Surratt of the District of Columbia to Mary Elizabeth Jenkins of southern Prince George's County. Mary was born in 1823, not far from the site of the Surratt House, and her parents and grandparents resided on land that is today part of Andrews Air Force Base. The Surratts, during the early years of their marriage, lived on a farm in the District of Columbia near Oxon Hill, Maryland. All three of their children, Isaac, Anna, and John, Jr., were born there and it continued to be their home until the 1850's.

Around the 1st of January, 1852, John Surratt purchased 287 acres of farmland at the intersection of the Marlboro-Piscataway and New Cut roads [present-day Routes 223 and 381, respectively] in Prince George's County from Charles B. Calvert. The sale marked the beginning of Surratt's involvement with the small crossroads community which before long was known as Surrattsville. John Surratt wasted little time in developing the land, and by April 23, 1852, a two-story frame building was already under construction on the property. The structure would soon become a tavern, a polling place, and a post office, as well as the home of John and Mary Surratt and their three children. It was here that the assassin, John Wilkes Booth, stopped thirteen years later on the night of April 14, 1865, during his escape from Washington.

On September 23, 1852, a tavern license was issued to John Surratt, and he started almost immediately to serve food and drink to local citizens of Prince George's County and provide lodging for weary travelers. About a year later, Mary Surratt and the three children moved into the new home, which remained their residence until November of 1864. In 1854, the Maryland General Assembly passed an act creating the Ninth Election District in Prince George's County. It later was called Surratt's Election District and even today retains that name. The same legislation specified that the polling place for the district be "Surratt's Hotel", as the Surratt House was referred to in the act. Later in 1854, on October 6, the U.S. Post Office Department established a post office at the Surratt House to meet the growing needs of the community. John Surratt was made postmaster at the location, and he

continued to serve as such until his death in 1862.

Thus, by the fall of 1854, the Surratt House was a tavern, a polling place, and a post office, as well as an abode for the Surratt family. Those who came there to eat and drink, to talk, and to spend the night were, for the most part, neither the very rich nor the very poor. They were local farmers, politicians, doctors, lawyers, carpenters, and even fellow tavern keepers. The Surratt House was a lively place where a man could get a good meal to fill his stomach, a drink to satisfy his thirst, and a smoke to just sit back and enjoy. But, more than that, it was a place where people could go to converse with friends and strangers alike about the problems of the community, the district, the county, the state, and, in the thirteen years between 1852 and 1865 more than ever before, the country.

FOLLOWING the sudden death of John Harrison Surratt on Tuesday, August 25, 1862 his bereaved widow, Mary, and his son, John, Jr., struggled to make a go of things at Surrattsville. However, by November of 1864, Mary Surratt had decided to lease the building to an ex-policeman, John M. Lloyd, and move with her two youngest children to a house on H Street in Washington, D.C. It was there that Mrs. Surratt ran a boarding house and there that John Wilkes Booth visited on several occasions prior to the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, perhaps to discuss with John Surratt, Jr. and others a plan to kidnap the President.

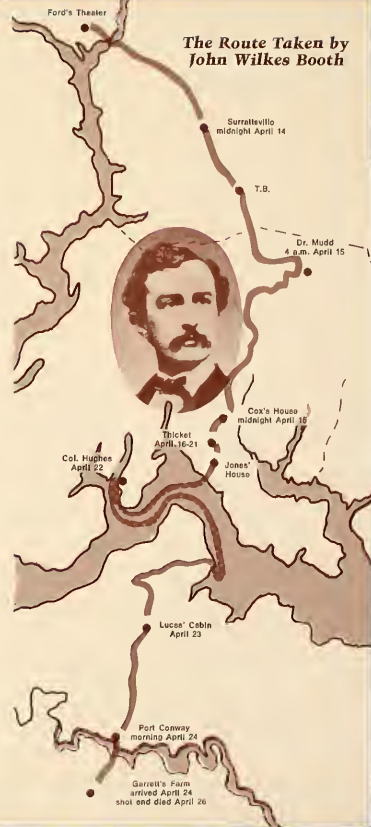
The assassination of President Lincoln and its aftermath represents one of the most traumatic periods in American history. The murder of Abraham Lincoln and the wave of fear, terror, hate, and confusion that followed scarred the lives of many Americans and even resulted in death for some—one of whom was Mary Surratt. Although Mrs. Surratt knew John Wilkes Booth and may have had knowledge of an earlier plan to kidnap Lincoln, the debate over whether and to what degree she was involved in the "plot" to assassinate the President still rages. Unquestionably, Mrs. Surratt and the seven other alleged conspirators who were tried and convicted by a military court for complicity in the assassination, were treated unfairly. The strong-arm tactics of Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton, which fed upon the mass public hysteria of the days and weeks following the murder of Lincoln, produced a gross miscarriage of justice. In the case of *Ex parte Milligan*, which originated prior to the assassination, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 1866 that a military court has no jurisdiction in cases involving civilians, if the civil courts are open. When the assassination conspiracy trial was conducted by a

military court in 1865 the civil courts of the District of Columbia were open! Had the Supreme Court ruling come a year earlier, Mary Surratt might never have been executed. Furthermore, Mrs. Surratt and the seven other defendants in the conspiracy trial were not in fact the only people being tried. The Military Court turned the proceedings into a prosecution of the entire Confederacy, its officials, and its "rebellious" activities. In so doing the Court accepted evidence that was inadmissible and irrelevant to the case of the eight accused conspirators who were actually present in the courtroom. It is significant that with virtually the same witnesses and for essentially the same crime, a civil court of the District of Columbia was unable to convict Mary Surratt's son John in 1867.

Following the murder of Abraham Lincoln, a search was started for Booth and his accomplice David E. Herold, as well as others suspected of having been involved in any way with the assassination. On the night of April 17, 1865, around 11:30 P.M., Mary Surratt was arrested at her Washington boarding house and then taken before dawn of the next day to the Carroll Prison (an annex of the Old Capitol Prison.) She remained there until April 30th, when she was transported by Colonel Baker in a buggy to the Washington Penitentiary. It was in one of the administrative buildings at the Penitentiary that the assassination conspiracy trial was held.

THE TRIAL proceedings began on May 9th, 1865, and continued until the end of June. On the 28th and 29th of June the Military Commission conferred and decided on the death penalty for Mrs. Surratt and her convicted co-conspirators Lewis Paine, George Atzerodt and David Herold. The tribunal handed down life imprisonments to co-conspirators Dr. Samuel Mudd, Samuel Arnold, Michael O'Laughlin and a six year sentence to Edward Spangler. On July 7, 1865, Mary Surratt was hung along with Paine, Atzerodt and Herold, thus marking the first time the U.S. Government had executed a woman. Certainly one must wonder why Mrs. Surratt was sent to the gallows, while her co-defendants, Mudd, Arnold, O'Laughlin and Spangler received less severe punishment. Still others, like Samuel Cox and John M. Lloyd, who had actively aided Booth in his escape, were not even tried.

Lloyd became a state's witness just prior to the assassination conspiracy trial, thus escaping an almost certain place on the gallows beside Mrs. Surratt, Paine, Herold, and Atzerodt. His testimony was largely responsible for sealing the fate of Mary Surratt. He testified that she had requested him to have field glasses and carbines ready for Booth and Herold when they arrived at the Surratt House late on the night of April





14th, 1865. Mrs. Surratt is further alleged to have delivered the field glasses to Lloyd for safekeeping earlier on the same day. Lloyd's testimony was accepted as reliable evidence in spite of the fact that he admitted to being drunk when Mrs. Surratt visited him on the 14th and said he could not remember clearly what they had discussed.

It is a sad commentary on the impartiality of the Military Commission which tried the alleged conspirators that the word of a forgetful drunk would weigh more heavily on the scales of justice than the character of Mrs. Surratt, regarded by her contemporaries as a gentle and deeply religious woman. Numerous local people who had known Mrs. Surratt well testified at the trial on her behalf, demonstrating a strong belief in her innocence, but this did not prevent her from dying the death of a common criminal—a death which many residents of the Clinton [formerly Surrattsville] area even today feel was unjustified. The enduring affection of the Clinton community for Mary Surratt is evidenced by the fact that local schools, roads, subdivisions, and businesses still carry "Surratt" as part of their names.

SOON AFTER the execution of Mary Surratt, the Surratt House ceased to be a tavern and became a private home. It was maintained as such by a succession of owners until 1965, when it was donated to the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission by Mr. & Mrs. B. K. Miller, Sr.

At that time, it was recognized that the house and grounds are significant to the United States, the State of Maryland, and to Prince George's County and is accordingly, a part of our American heritage. In 1968, the Commission purchased the land on which the house is located.

In order to restore this house, as it stands now on the same grounds as it stood in 1865, a group of citizens from the Clinton area formed the Committee for the Restoration of the Surratt House and began a campaign to raise money for the restoration.

Over and above the funds raised by the Committee the U.S. Government provided acquisition funds and the Maryland Historical Trust has provided funds for the restoration in addition to the amount budgeted by the Park and Planning Commission.

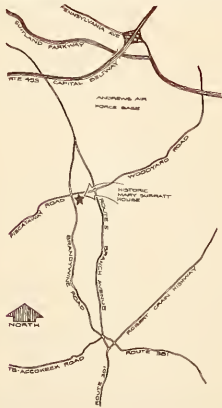
Tax free contributions will be accepted and placed in a special account for the restoration and preservation project. Contributions can be made payable to The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) indicating that the donation is for the Surratt House Restoration.

#### COMMITTEE FOR THE RESTORATION OF THE MARY SURRETT HOUSE

Thomas S. Gwynn, Jr., Chairman	
W. C. Dutton, Jr.	Mrs. Blanche Van De Rye
Edward C. Freeman	John M. Walton
Larry G. Manuel	Harrison Weymouth, Jr.
Hon. Genella S. McGinniss	Thomas V. Miller
John A. Scheibel	Del. John W. Wolfgang

#### THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

W. C. Dutton, Jr., Chairman	
Royce Hanson, Vice Chairman	
Commissioners	
Edwin H. Brown	Richmond M. Keeney
John W. Churchill	George O. Kephart
Mable Granke	Raymond G. LaPlaca
Ann Hopper	Helen Scharf



SURRETTVILLE, THE HOME OF JOHN B. SURRETT.—[SKETCHED BY A. McCALEX]



# The SURRETT HOUSE

and the saga of  
Mary Surratt

Tours are conducted by costumed members of the Surratt Society. For times of tours call 868-1121 or 277-2200, ext. 348.

The Maryland-National Capital Park & Planning Commission



H. SURRETT.—[SKETCHED BY A. M'CALLUM.]

# The SURRETT HOUSE

and the saga of  
Mary Surratt



See  
Conspiration  
Mary Surratt

Notes to Chapters XI & XII

ors

day night, March 16, 1865. Hall Research. Booth played Pescara in *The Apostate* at Ford's Theater on March 18. From the above it would appear that March 17 is the correct date.

<sup>7</sup> For testimony of Weichmann, see Pitman, p. 118.

<sup>8</sup> Ella Turner made an abortive attempt to suffocate herself with chloroform. See *New York Daily Tribune*, April 17, 1865.

<sup>9</sup> For testimony of Anna Surratt, see Pitman, p. 131. Although Weichmann makes no mention of a love affair with Anna Surratt, there is evidence that such was the case. There is a letter in the National Archives (W409 JAO 1865), written to Weichmann from New York City in February of 1865 by a Mrs. Clara Ritter, in which she says: "I hope you will bring dear Miss S—tt with you to call on me. I could love her for yr sake, & her brother. . . . May yr future be all you wish. I know & feel Miss S—tt is worthy of you, & they are all favorably disposed towards you I believe." See also *The Case for Mrs. Surratt*, pp. 72-3.

<sup>10</sup> Father Wigget was also Mrs. Surratt's confessor. He and Father Walter walked with her to the gallows.

<sup>11</sup> Not quoted word for word, but with no loss of meaning. See Lafayette C. Baker, *History of the United States Secret Service* (Philadelphia: L. C. Baker, 1867), pp. 562-3.

<sup>12</sup> Booth was born on May 10, 1838; John Surratt, on April 13, 1844; Payne, on April 22, 1844; Herold, on June 16, 1842; O'Laughlin, in June 1840; Arnold, on September 6, 1834; Atzerodt, on June 12, 1835; and Dr. Mudd, on December 20, 1833. Hall Research.

<sup>13</sup> For testimony of Chester, see Pitman, p. 44. For the confession of Atzerodt, see below, p. 385.

<sup>14</sup> For testimony of Stabler, see Pitman, p. 71.

<sup>15</sup> Captain D. H. L. Gleason confirmed this and did report it to the War Department. For Gleason's version, see *Magazine of History*, February 1911. See also Lloyd Lewis, *Myths After Lincoln* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1929), p. 231; hereafter referred to as *Myths*.

<sup>16</sup> The italics are Weichmann's. See Rockville lecture, below, pp. 431-2.

<sup>17</sup> Probably Arnold. See Arnold, pp. 46-7.

CHAPTER XII

<sup>1</sup> See also *Washington Star*, December 7, 1881.

<sup>2</sup> See Arnold, p. 25.

<sup>3</sup> For testimony of Thompson and Norton, see *Surratt Trial*, I, 510-17.

<sup>4</sup> For testimony of Lloyd, see Pitman, p. 85. See also *Surratt Trial*, I, 277-8.

<sup>5</sup> At the first trial Weichmann gave the date of *The Apostate* as March 24, but later corrected it to the 18th.

<sup>6</sup> See *Surratt Trial*, I, 381.

<sup>7</sup> See Rockville lecture, below, pp. 435 and 438.

<sup>8</sup> For testimony of Martha Murray, see Pitman, p. 154, and *Surratt Trial*, I, 246-7. Mrs. Murray testified that she did not know Mrs. Surratt and that Lewis Payne had applied directly to her for a room. She also stated that she could not re-

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### To Remove a Blot

In 1852 a man named John Surratt built a two-story clapboard house in the Maryland countryside about ten miles from Washington, D.C. Soon it served as a tavern, polling place, post office and home for the Surratt family, and the area became known as Surrattsville. After Surratt died in 1862, his widow Mary leased the building and moved to Washington, where she opened a boarding-house. It was there, in 1865, that John Wilkes Booth plotted the assassination of Abraham Lin-

coln. One of Booth's associates, John Lloyd, turned state's evidence and implicated Mrs. Surratt in the conspiracy. Though Lloyd had been drunk during the critical conversation with Mrs. Surratt, an overzealous military court accepted his testimony. The widow—whose last words to a priest were "Father, I am innocent"—was hanged in July 1865 along with three alleged members of Booth's cabal. The U.S. Government, meanwhile, had changed the name of Surrattsville to Robeystown; today, it is known as Clinton, Md.

But the citizens of the area were sure that one of their own had been wronged. They continued to give their schools the Surrattsville name, and they kept a close eye on the Surratt house. In 1965 its last private owner donated it to the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission. A group of local citizens raised money for its restoration, and last week it was formally dedicated as a historical monument. Boy Scouts directed traffic while an honor guard from nearby Andrews Air Force Base presented colors. Said Restoration

Committee Chairman Thomas S. Gwynn Jr. to the 700 onlookers, including 30-odd Surratt descendants who attended the affair: "To remove this blot, this blemish, this cloud from the name of one of our local residents, is why we are here today."



MARY SURRATT

MESERVE COLLECTION

# Mary Surratt

## 111 years ago, she was hanged; was it a mistake?

By Michele D. Ross  
Sentinel Correspondent

She was hanged July 7, 1865, the first woman executed by the U.S. government. Mary Eugenia Surratt, 42, was put to death 111 years ago today for her alleged role in the conspiracy to the assassinate Abraham Lincoln.

But her guilt is questioned by many historians and residents of Clinton, for-



MARY E. SURRATT  
...strong Confederate ties

merly Surrattsville, where her two-story frame house still stands at the intersection of Rte. 223 and 381 in Prince George's County.

Today the house is a major tourist attraction, purchased and renovated by the Park and Planning Commission.

The house, now painted a deep maroon, was described in 1864 as a comfortable two-story double frame building containing nine rooms -- almost all with fireplaces -- with porticos at the front and side where visitors could enjoy fresh air during the sultry seasons.

The Civil War ended on April 19, 1864 at Appomattox and just five days later the President was assassinated by John Wilkes Booth. Mary Surratt's conspiracy trial followed, leaving no time for wounds to heal or emotions to subside.

In 1852, Mary and her husband, John Harrison Surratt, built their home on a 287-acre farm where they grew tobacco and corn. Their house was the community's social center and the official polling place at election time. They ran a country store, a tavern and the Surrattsville Post Office.

But the war changed all this. Her two sons left home, one a Confederate soldier, the other a Confederate courier. Her husband died, and Mary was forced to leave the burden of farm and business to move to her Washington boarding house at 604 H St. NW.

### Damaging testimony

She leased her tavern to John M. Lloyd, a former D.C. policeman accustomed to a \$50 a week salary. Ironically, it was Lloyd who later gave the most damaging testimony against Mary. Fearing the consequences of his own dealings with Booth, Lloyd turned state's evidence and escaped trial.

Lloyd testified Mary knowingly aided Booth in his escape. On the Tuesday before the assassination, Lloyd said, he met Mary on the road to Uniontown, where she asked Lloyd to get the "shooting irons" ready. They were given to him earlier, he said, by her son John.

On April 14, the day of the assassination, Lloyd said, Mary came to his home, gave him a field glass and told him to have the two carbines and two bottles of whiskey ready since someone would be by for them that night.

That night, Lloyd said, Booth and his companions picked up the supplies at the tavern, although Booth, whose leg was broken, did not come in.

The defense agreed that Mary was in Surrattsville the day of the assassination but said it was not to aid in the conspiracy. The defense contended she went there to collect a debt due from a land sale made by her late husband. The meeting with Lloyd was acknowledged, but defense witnesses testified no one saw her give him a package.

Defense witnesses spoke of the woman's kind, loyal and religious character. By contrast, Lloyd was called a drunkard by several witnesses, most of whom testified he was drunk that day.

### Author believes him

James O. Hall, retired from the Department of Labor and currently writing a book entitled "Murder at Ford's Theatre," puts full credence in Lloyd's testimony. However, he does question the fairness of the trial and wonders whether it was Mary on trial or the Confederate cause, since much of the testimony dealt with this topic.

Prince George's County historian John Walton says too many people try to clear Mary of her Confederate allegiance instead of the crime for which she was charged.

And, there is no doubt that Mary's Confederate ties were many. Her husband, John Harrison Surratt, was said to be a leading secessionist, and both sons served the Confederate cause. Booth frequented her boarding house and the tavern in Surrattsville was known as a "Safe house" by Confederate spies and couriers. Her son, John, also plotted with Booth in an unsuccessful kidnap attempt of Lincoln.

However, Walton said, many persons in the area were Confederate supporters, and records show only one person in Prince George's County voted for Lincoln in the 1860 election.



The proceedings against Surratt were probably unconstitutional. The trial was conducted by a military commission and on 1866 Supreme Court ruling on another case, *Ex parte Milligan*, declared it unconstitutional to try a civilian in a military court when federal courts in the area are open.

At the time, officials justified the military trial by saying the crime was the assassination of the commander-in-chief of the armed forces, in a fortified town.

"If I was one of the Union officers who sat on the commission -- only one member was not a Union officer-- I would have convicted her on the evidence as presented," said Hall.

"However if I was a civilian listening to the same case in a federal court, without the tensions of the time," Hall said, "my verdict would be that the prosecution had not proven the case."

### Four doomed

Mary was one of the eight convicted conspirators tried in the administrative buildings of the Washington Penitentiary, now Fort Lesley McNair. Only four, including Mary, were sentenced to death. Three others were given life imprisonment and one a six-year sentence.

Two men who aided Booth in his escape, Samuel Cox and John M. Lloyd, were never tried.

There are conflicting stories about the treatment of Mary Surratt during her stay at the Carroll Prison, annex of the Old Capitol Prison and at the Washington Penitentiary, where she was held when the trial began.

Some accounts relate that Mary was shackled and not permitted to have visitors or a change of clothes during the 72 days she was held in prison. It is said she faced the court with her head covered in a canvas sack with slits cut out for her to see.

Hall said his research show Mary Surratt was treated better than the other prisoners and was not forced to wear the canvas hood. She was given additional food, said Hall.

The other convicted conspirators were heavily ironed. They were dressed in padded canvas hoods while in their cells, to prevent them from doing harm to themselves. Hall said this was also a form of punishment used by the British and American navies.

### Son acquitted

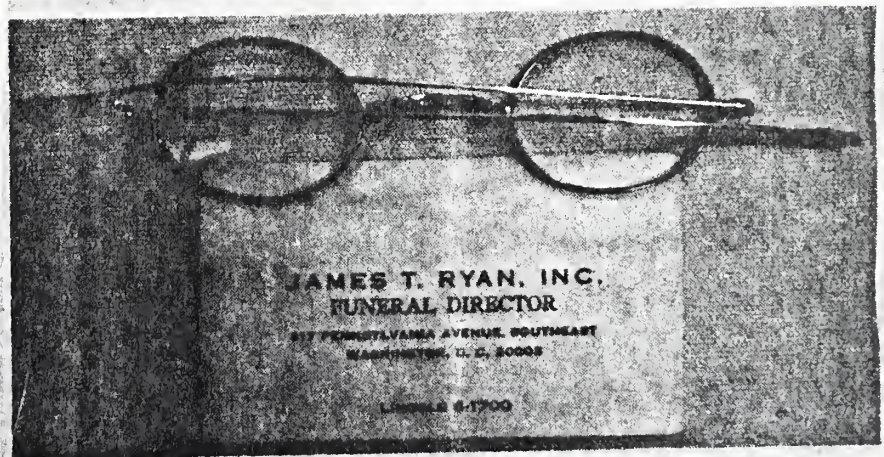
Later, after tensions died down, John Harrison Surratt, her son, who initially fled abroad, was brought to trial. Although he was a good friend of Booth's and participated in a conspiracy to kidnap Lincoln, he was acquitted after the prosecution failed to conclusively tie his role in the kidnap conspiracy to the murder.

Visitors to the Surratt Home today may see the tavern room, which also served as the post office and polling

place, the public dining room and the family dining room. All three are furnished with period pieces. In one exhibit room there is a permanent display of artifacts relating to the assassination and in the other a temporary display of clothing from the period. Tours are given 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Thursday and Friday, and from noon to 4 p.m. Saturday and Sunday.

After Mary's execution in 1865, the name of the town was officially changed to Robeystown, for acting postmaster Andrew Robey and in 1878 to Clinton. However some Clinton residents still call the town Surrattsville and the Post Office still delivers a letter addressed to Surrattsville.

MICHELLE D. ROSS is a writer for the American News Service



Mary Surratt's eyeglasses are among remaining artifacts.

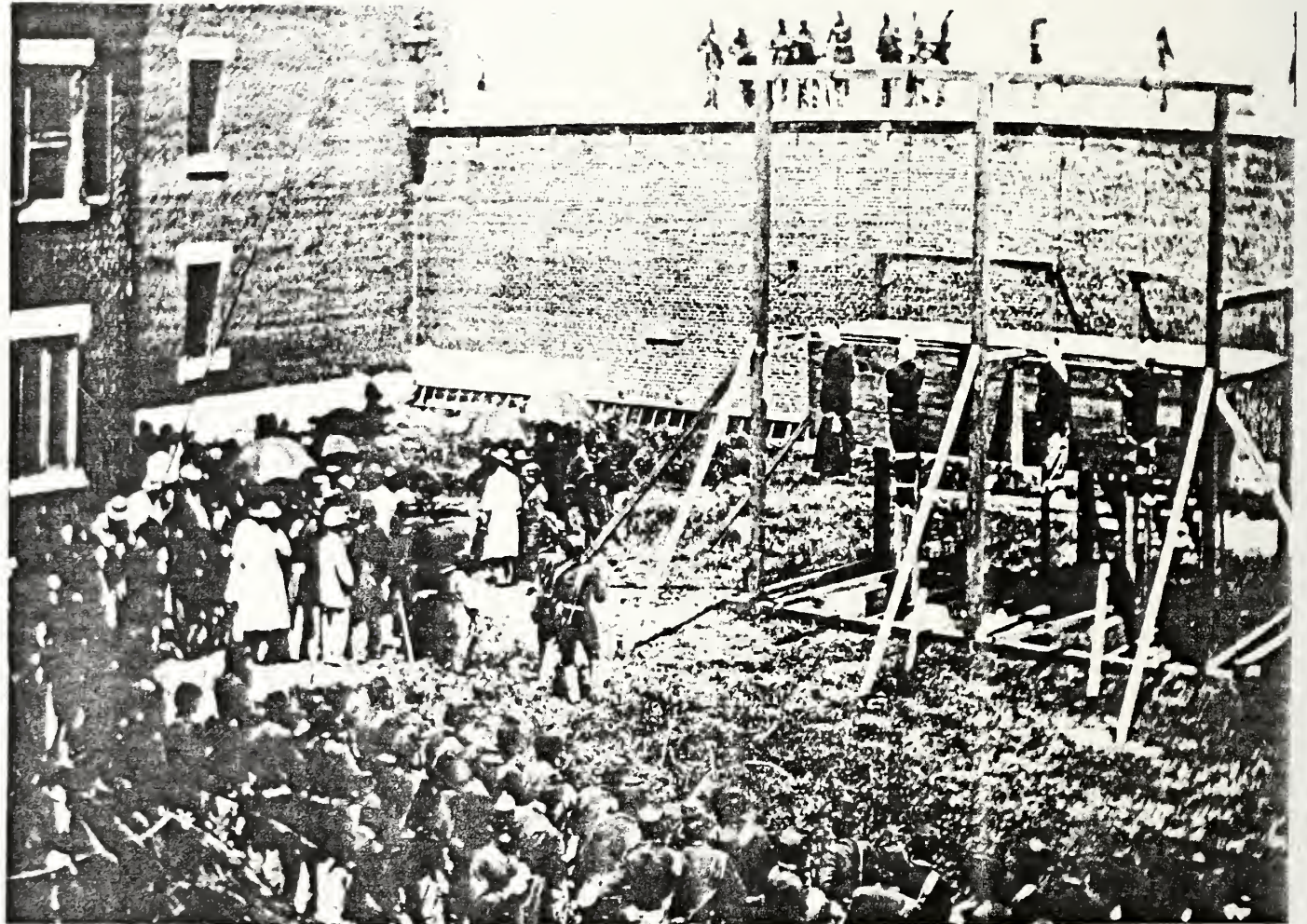
Photo by John C. Brennan



The Sentinel

July 7, 1976

Laurel, Prince Georges  
County, Md.



Mathew Brady photograph of Mary Surratt hanging; she's on the left.





# SURRATT SOCIETY NEWS

Volume V - No. 1  
January 1980  
Laurie Verge, Editor

Surratt House - 868-1121  
9110 Brandywine Road  
Clinton, Maryland 20735

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

If the Surratt House could talk (and, of course, I think it can), it would say "Thank You" to all those who visited it during Candlelight Tours this past Christmas. It would have only high praise for the docents, and I think the old house would likely say to them, "Thanks for making me a beautiful home, full of joy and happiness once more!"

The House is probably content to be closed and able to rest for the months of January and February because it knows the Society has a busy calendar planned for 1980. Even though the House will be closed to regular tours, the first special event will be on February 9-10, the Victorian Valentine Display. Next, the 8th J.W. Booth Escape Tour will be on April 12. (Please call soon if you want to join this tour -- the bus is filling fast.) April 26-27 will host the Victorian House-cleaning Display -- inside and out. May 13, the Surratt Society Annual Banquet will be held, and June 22 will bring the lovely Victorian Wedding Reception. The Civil War Encampment has a tentative date of July 5-6 (this may be changed to 12-13, so check with the House first). On September 20, our 9th Booth Tour is scheduled. The weekend of October 11-12 finds the Victorian Craft Fair planned, and that brings us to the end of the year and December 15-17 -- our Candlelight Tours.

Try to attend as many special events as you can; it not only helps the Kitchen Fund, but it helps keep your mind off the rather depressing news of the world for awhile!

I feel that 1980 will be a very productive year for the Society and the Surratt House; in fact, as I gaze into my crystal ball, I see a.....kitchen! Do you suppose.....?????!!!!

JOAN CHACONAS

## HAPPY NEW YEAR TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Mr.&Mrs. Forest Warner - Ft. Washington, Md.  
Albert C. Daniel, Jr. - Clinton, Md.  
R.R. Tippy - Oak Ridge, Tenn.  
Allene Surratt Vehon - Marion, Ill.  
Mrs. Allan Kokkonen - Pearia, Ariz.  
Mr.&Mrs. Glenn Koons - Hershey, Pa.  
Roger D. Hunt - Rockville, Md.  
George S. Kopp - Alexandria, Va.  
Frank L. Blades, Sr. - Bridgeton, N.J.  
Helen O. Reed - Bethesda, Md.  
Mr.&Mrs. H.F. Benton - Mechanicsville, Md.  
Monica Leiter - Plano, Tex.  
Dorothy A. Small - Brandywine, Md.

## KITCHEN BREAK-THROUGH

On the day before Thanksgiving, John Walton unearthed what appears to be the remains of the builder's trench for the original kitchen wing foundation. Additional excavations are being carried out to determine positively whether physical evidence for the location and size of the original kitchen wing has in fact been found.

Ed and Rita Bastek, associate members of the Society, have generously offered to place on permanent loan any pieces from their antique kitchen tools collection that might be deemed suitable for the restored kitchen.

Our Kitchen Fund has gone over the \$12,000. mark, and the Park and Planning Commission has allocated funds for the architectural renderings. Can our kitchen be far behind?

## GOOD NEWS

This past fall, the Society heard rumors that the sad little boardinghouse on H Street might fall victim to progress. The Society initiated a letter-writing campaign to generate interest. We have since been informed by DON'T TEAR IT DOWN, a civic action group in D.C., that it appears that the house is safe. Our president checked with Mr. John Fonder-smith of the Planning and Development Office, and he echoed the same findings. An associate member from Wisconsin contacted her Senator, who put the question to Mr. Robert Moore, Chairman of the National Capital Planning Commission. Mr. Moore stated that no decision had been made concerning the site at this time.

Now, if someone would "adopt" the little house as a preservation project.....

## AND NOW THE BAD NEWS

The November 20, 1979 edition of "The Maryland Independent" carried the conclusion to a story printed in the July issue of this newsletter.

As reported at that time, Rep. Marjorie Holt had initiated an attempt to gain Congressional action in clearing the name of Mrs. Surratt. Mrs. Holt has now given up her efforts. She states, "Unless concrete evidence can be produced, I believe it would be futile to attempt to change the record". Although she remains sympathetic to the issue, Mrs. Holt feels that the needed support on the floor of Congress would not be there.

Few of us were surprised with her decision. If the "concrete evidence" were there, the plight of Mrs. Surratt would not have remained a mystery for the past 114 years.





## ANTIQUES REQUESTED

Associate member, Arthur Guy Kaplan of Baltimore is in the process of writing a Price Guide Book for Antique Jewelry.

In order for the book to be of value to the average collector, it is necessary that a wide range of jewelry, both expensive and inexpensive, be photographed. Mr. Kaplan is interested in hearing from members of our group who would be willing to share their pieces with him. He requests that photographs of items be submitted in 5x7 glossy finish. Full credit will be given to the individual supplying the photo, or the name will be kept strictly confidential per the wishes of the contributor.

Address all correspondence to Mr. Kaplan at P.O. Box 1942, Baltimore, Md. 21203

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING, January 9, 1980, 10:30 am at the home of Mary Jo Shaver in Clinton.

## KITCHEN FUND UPDATE

We are pleased to report that the fund has received a \$50. donation from the Clinton Village Mart Merchants' Association, and that \$125 has been donated by members who wish to remain anonymous.

## FROM THE BOOKSHELF



Let's all start off 1980 right by utilizing our "remarkably good" library more this year. To get yourself off to a good start, the librarian recommends the new purchase, The Cosgrove Report by G.J.A. O'Toole. This may be only a work of fiction about Booth and the assassination, but it is so well-written and documented with historical background that it is a fascinating piece of writing. "Our" James O. Hall proofread the manuscript; his comment being, "It's wild!"

We very much appreciate the new contributions to the library:

From Mike Kauffman - xerox of an article on Judge Frederick Stone and the defense of Mudd and Herold, New York Daily Tribune, June 10, 1883.

- xerox of an article on Mrs. Surratt, ibid, June 17, 1883/Sept. 2 and 11, 1873.

- xerox of an article on Mrs. Surratt, The Daily Morning Chronicle, August 26, 1873.

- xerox of an article by Lincoln Trial Court Reporter, Edw. V. Murphy, New York Times Magazine, Apr. 9, 1916.

From John Brennan - Cassette tape entitled

"Favorable Actions of President Carter on Dr. Mudd Case" by Dr. R.D. Mudd, a talk on 9/27/79 before the Kiwanis Club of Saginaw, Michigan.

Pamphlet, "Old Maryland" (the "Old/100 Years Ago" series) compiled by Skip Whitson. Article, "Saint Timothy's Hall" by Erick F.Davis, History Trails - Baltimore County Historical Society.

From Daniel Toomey - Pamphlet, "A History of Relay, Maryland, and the Thomas Viaduct" by Daniel Toomey.

U.S. Grant and the American Military Tradition by Bruce Catton (paperback).

Henry Ward Beecher: An American Portrait by Paxton Hibben.

Pamphlet - "Notes On The Uniform and Equipments of the United States Cavalryman, 1861 to 1865" by James Stamatalos.

And 1864 edition of Gunn's New Domestic Physician Or Home Book of Health by John G. Gunn, M.D.

The Age of Civil War and Reconstruction 1830-1900: A Book of Interpretive Essays edited by Charles Crowe.

5 prints of the American Bicentennial Series by Peter Allen Misbet.

The 1877 Atlases and Other Maps of the Eastern Shore of Maryland - Bicentennial Edition 1776-1976.

From Richard Hasson - xerox of a report by John P. Marquand on The Day Lincoln Was Shot by Jim Bishop

- xerox of an article

"Police Log Notes, 'Gloom That Over-shadowed The Nation'" in Post, April 14, 1965 - page from the blotter of the old Eighth Police Precinct the night Lincoln was assassinated.

Lincoln's Own Yarns and Stories by Col. A.K. McClure.

The Day Lincoln Was Shot by Jim Bishop

## OUR THANKS TO ALL

NANCY GRIFFITH, Librarian

LIFE MEMBERSHIP NOW AVAILABLE. At the request of several Society members, the Executive Committee voted to offer Life Membership to those interested. The fee is \$100. For those of you who find it hard to remember to renew membership, this might be the answer. For further information, call or write the Surratt House.

REMEMBER: SURRATT HOUSE IS CLOSED TO ALL BUT APPOINTMENT TOURS FROM JANUARY 1 TO MARCH 1. BUT THE VICTORIAN VALENTINE DISPLAY WILL BE HELD ON FEBRUARY 9-10.

THE SURRATT SOCIETY  
9110 Brandywine Road  
Clinton, Maryland 20735  
ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

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## JOHN "BULL" FRIZZELL

One following the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal towpath, about a mile and a half west of Georgetown, D.C., will be sure to see across the canal an attractive and aged stone house standing quite alone. And, if the explorer is interested in obtaining a closer look at the house, he may do so by using a boat ferry located there to cross the shallow water-filled ditch. A sign over the entrance identifies the place as the Abner Cloud House, built circa 1801, and goes on to say that the restored structure is now listed as a National Historic Site. A man named Abner Cloud is credited with having built both the house and a nearby gristmill, the foundations of which can be seen just west of the residence.

But the subject of this sketch is a man named John Frizzell, a Virginia native, who in 1852 bought the stone house and mill from Abner Cloud's widow and who lived for over forty years at the site. John was of such massive and muscular proportions that he became known far and wide by the nickname "Bull". A completely fearless man, of pirate-like appearance, he wore a silver plate to cover a skull fracture suffered in one of his adventures. There is a story that Frizzell joined with the expedition formed in 1859 to hunt down and subdue the abolitionist firebrand John Brown, and there is also an allied tale that he cut off one of John Brown's ears after the execution and kept it as a grisly souvenir.

Though Frizzell's exploits as a brawler and adventurer, coupled with a singular disregard for the law, might have earned him a mention or two in the annals of local notoriety, he was to be remembered for another much more important reason. IN 1864, HE AND SEVERAL OTHER CONFEDERATE ENTHUSIASTS CAME QUITE CLOSE TO ABDUCTING THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES, as a war measure, and fleeing with him to Richmond.

The coming of the Civil War in 1861, with its repressive measures against Southern sympathizers living in the Washington and Georgetown areas, served to intensify Frizzell's defiance of authority, and the Yankee military regime had no better luck in taming the gigantic miller than had their local predecessors. In one of his brushes with an enforcer of the edicts of occupation, Frizzell was arrested and thrown into the Old Brick Capitol which had been hastily converted into a prison pen for all those accused of "disloyalty". Frizzell's captors soon discovered, however, that no amount of bullying or beating would cower their hulking and disrespectful prisoner. Frustrated guards who pointed their muskets at him invariably lost their nerve when he dared them to go ahead and shoot if they wanted to.

It was while Frizzell was entertaining the Rebel prisoners with some of his blustering antics that he came to the notice of a fellow inmate named Thomas Nelson Conrad. Conrad had been the headmaster of a school in Georgetown known as the Georgetown Institute and had been indiscreet enough at commencement exercises in June 1861 to openly tout the Southern cause -- for which offense he was promptly jailed. As soon as he obtained his release from Old Capitol Prison, he made his way south to join General J.E.B. Stuart's Cavalry Corps, where his experience as a Methodist lay-minister admirably qualified him to become Regimental Chaplain of the Third Virginia Cavalry. This ministerial role soon broadened out into one that included breathtaking spying assignments within the Federal lines, as well as frequent trips back and forth in various disguises between Washington and Richmond.

As the war ground its fearful and tragic way down into the latter part of 1864, Conrad and a few trusty cohorts formulated an almost incredible plan to aid the flagging Southern hopes. President Lincoln was to be kidnapped on one of his solitary rides from the White House out to the grounds of the Soldiers' Home and was to be taken as a hostage by relays of teams of fast horses to Richmond. It was widely known that President Lincoln discouraged and resisted the efforts of his advisers to submit to military protection, and thus Conrad and his planners expected to accomplish their mission "without lot or hindrance."

Obviously, a prime requirement of the endeavor would be the necessity of delivering up Mr. Lincoln in Richmond alive and free from injury, and the person selected to pinion and restrain the six-foot, one-time amateur wrestling champion and rail-splitter was none other than "Bull" Frizzell -- who wholeheartedly accepted Conrad's invitation to join the mission and do whatever was asked of him. A Virginia cavalryman named Mountjoy and a servant of Conrad's named William were also prime movers in the scheme with complete cooperation being assured from agents and sympathizers at key points in Washington, Maryland, and Virginia.

The attack on the President was to take place at the Fourteenth Street entrance to the Soldiers' Home by four mounted men already named. William was to jump aboard the Presidential carriage and, at pistol point, enforce new directions on the driver. "Bull" Frizzell would be in the vehicle securing the person of the President, with Conrad leading the entourage, and Mountjoy following to protect the rear.

Many days were spent by the group in Lafayette Park, opposite the White House, observing the comings and goings of the President; but on the day before the day set for the attempt, a calamitous event befell the undertaking. Lincoln rode out of the White House grounds in his carriage as he had done innumerable times before, but he was now surrounded by heavily armed cavalry troopers!

